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Dedicated to

My Uncle

WILLIAM S. HAWKES

For whose patient work as amanuensis
I am deeply indebted

Frontispiece

The Forest

THE TRAIL TO THE WOODS

BY

CLARENCE HAWKES

AUTHOR OF "THE LITTLE FORESTERS," "STORIES OF THE GOOD GREEN WOOD"

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Trail to the Woods

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
Introductory	7
Whistlewings, the Woodcock	11
The Tripod Fox	21
Two Lords of the Forest	58
Tow-Head and the Old He-One	70
The King of the Clouds	81
What Puzzled the Doe	91
An Ill-timed Flight	104
David and Goliath	113
August in the Pasture Lands	119
Famine in the Wilderness	129
The Prize of the Creel	142
A Feline Fury	151
Two Forest Hymns	167

INTRODUCTORY

How enticing to the feet of childhood, especially to those of a boy, is the trail that leads to the forest!

It may be along an old wood road choked with grasses and plantain and bordered with brambles and weeds, or by a crooked cow path, twisting and turning, but the way is that to deep delight, and the heart of the child is glad as he journeys.

O the sweet wildwood, with its incense of pine and of balsam, with its ferns, mosses, and lichens, with its rustle of leaves, sighing of zephyrs, and its sense of infinite peace! How it folds its green arms about you, soothing your fevered mind with its own deep languor, breathing a benediction sweet as the sleep of childhood!

What couches of plush or velvet are as cool and inviting as the moss-covered knolls of the forest, where I lay my tired head upon the breast of my mother, Nature, and am a little child again, full of hope and trust and infinite yearning?

I love to sit in the forest when the first bright arrow of sunlight pierces the dome of my temple and the birds and the blossoms are glad. This is life indeed, to feel the rush of morning down the sweet aisles of the woods, where all of its creatures rejoice.

I love to lie at eventide in the slumbrous aisles of the ancient forest, when the vesper hymn of every feathered creature that can chirp or twitter is at its height, and the last rays of the setting sun are kissing the tree tops good night.

How the triumphant passage of this sweet evening hymn swells the arches of this noble cathedral, while from moss and brake come innumerable soft whispers, undertones and overtones in the great symphony of Nature!

Some there are who prefer to sing their quaint solos, a little apart from the rest, or in some lull of the great Te Deum. Such is the mating song of the whip-poor-will, with its wild, monotonous refrain. The hoarse cry of the night hawk is also in a minor key, while the shrill call of the piping frog is a note peculiar to its own strong throat.

Shy little friends there are, too, that will come flying and hopping to see who the great stranger is, and why he stripped the hemlock to make him a bed. What downy couch or poppy pillow can compare with my bed of hemlock, whose very fragrance breathes sleep?

A squirrel barks fiercely at me from his bough overhead. If I do not tell him immediately who I am and what my business is he will be both angry and curious. Then he will run down the trunk of

the tree, and along the ground towards me, all the time scolding and barking. He will finally conclude I am not worth minding, and go away for a romp with his fellows.

A little brown bird comes hopping to see if there are any crumbs from my evening meal that she can have for her own small supper.

If you lie very still and are careful not to make sudden motions, the birds and squirrels will almost eat from your hand.

What companionship there is in these noble trees! How proudly they stand, holding to mother earth with their gnarled and knotted feet! Like human petitioners they lift their naked palms to heaven in the winter time, praying for warmth and light.

What life quivers in their leaves and branches to-night! Speaking a soft language all their own, they whisper benedictions to weary man. How the landscape would miss them, and how the birds and squirrels would mourn if earth were suddenly shorn of all its trees! Man, too, would mourn their loss, as that of a departed friend.

In the woods there is no sham or deceit. Oaks are oaks and maples are maples. Even the little scrub spruce is content to be what it is.

THE TRAIL TO THE WOODS

WHISTLEWINGS, THE WOODCOCK

MARCH had come and gone and the season of melting snow and running water was with us. There was still some snow to be found in hollows in the deep woods, but the open fields were as bare and brown as they had been when the first snowflake fell.

No matter where you went, you always heard the sound of running water. Maybe it was only a slight silver tinkle of a tiny rill slowly feeling its way underground to the more ambitious stream. Or perhaps it was the roaring of the brook, now swollen to a turbulent, foaming river; but it was water, water everywhere.

A boy of some ten summers was standing in the dooryard of an old farmhouse, listening to the many-tongued whisper of spring. There was no one particular thing that conveyed this glad message to his ears, only a vague undertone; or perhaps a beating in the breast of Nature told him that spring had come. Perhaps it was the look of the clouds or the feel of the wind, or maybe it was only the running

water, but the message had been understood, and the heart of the boy was glad. Robins would be hopping about in the mowing across the road in a few days, and the piping frog would peep in the meadows, at which sound the sugar buckets would

The Brook

be gathered in, for every sugar-maker knows that this frog gives warning when the end of the sugar season has come.

Then clear and strong above the silver tinkle,

the tinkle of running water underground, and the whisper of the dank mold, and the sighing of the wind in the leafless branches, the boy heard another note that thrilled him with a strange sense of the new life that was coming, coming with silent, resistless force.

It was a hoarse, glad cry from the swampy land by the brookside; not a peep nor a pipe, but a cry. So much like that of the night hawk, as he sweeps through the summer sky on spotted wings, that I defy even a woodsman to distinguish the two notes, were it not for the season. The night hawk would not scour the upper air for flies and millers for three months to come, so of course it was not that strange bird. But how like his note the cry from the pasture land!

Then a small, birdlike speck arose near the brook and went circling up into the sky until it looked no larger than a mosquito. Round and round it went, up in the dusky air, still uttering its strange spring cry, "Beef, beef, beef." When the bird had circled about in the upper air for three or four minutes, it slowly descended, not in a spiral as it had gone up, but taking a zigzag course down a slightly inclined plane and alighting almost at the identical spot from which it had started.

What could this queer bird be doing? What

kind of a bird was it, and what did this strange flight into the spring sky mean? The boy went into the house, put on an overcoat, and went down into the pasture.

He could hear the hoarse cry above him when he reached the pasture land. The bird had taken another flight and he had lost sight of it. He must wait for its descent. Then he heard a queer whistling sound, something like the whir of an alarm clock, only it was more a whistle than a whir, and then the hoarse, exultant cry, "Beef, beef, beef." A second later, just above the boy's head, a woodcock whirred down, uttering a very rapid chirping song. It skimmed along just above the brown weeds and plumped down by the brookside.

"What a queer performance!" said the boy to himself. "I didn't know woodcock ever acted like that. I wonder what he is up to."

Soon the bird rose again, circling about and uttering his strange cry.

It was not a song, there was no music in it, but the bird seemed to take these flights from mere spring exultation. It was probably his one note of joy, his only vocal accomplishment.

There was exultation, too, in the flight. It was like a boy drawing his sled up a long hill, and then taking the swift plunge downward. Just as the boy

shouted and swung his cap at the top of the hill, so the woodcock uttered his one peculiar note.

Again and again he took the upward flight, always returning to the same spot.

The boy watched him until the stars came out and he could no longer follow the dim form, then he went back to the house, but he could still hear the hoarse spring cry of the woodcock late into the night.

For about a week these strange twilight flights of the woodcock lasted, and then they suddenly ceased, and not a peep, not a note would be heard from his long bill until another spring.

Whether this is one of the woodcock's mating maneuvers, or an attempt at song, or only a mad flight that he takes from mere exuberance, I do not know, but it is one of the strange sights of springtime, and many a hunter who has carried home dozens of woodcock in his game bag has never seen it.

To attempt to describe the plumage of the woodcock is a matter as difficult as it would be to describe the exquisite loveliness of a fragile flower, soft tinted with neutral shades for which there are no words. There are types of beauty that elude speech even as the will-o'-the-wisp eludes the grasp of the human hand. The penciling of the woodcock's plumage is so delicate and the tones are so

harmonious and their shades so soft that they baffle description. You must not imagine from this that the woodcock is a handsome bird, for in shape he is very homely, but the delicate penciling of his plu-

Woodcock

mage redeems all his faults in the eyes of the naturalist.

Upon the top of his head there is a brown satin bonnet, and lighter plumage under his throat. Upon his back, behind his wings, is a burnt-umber blanket

or shawl, which he wears proudly. Many of the umber feathers are tipped with yellow or slightly traced with buff. The under side of the woodcock is usually lighter than his back, as here the brown becomes snuff color and very light buff. The only white on the bird is the under side of the tail.

There is very little if any difference in the plumage of Mr. and Mrs. Woodcock, so that the sex of the bird is usually a mystery. I imagine that the male woodcock may be a little heavier than his mate, but they vary so in size that one never could tell the sex in that way.

Mr. Woodcock's most conspicuous feature is his long bill, some two inches and a half in length, which, sticking out on all occasions, gives him a pompous air. He is a queer-looking little chap as he scurries along just above the tops of the alders, his wings whistling like a penny whistle with a pea in it.

The length of my specimen from the top of the head to the tip of the tail is nine inches. The height from the top of the head to the ground is eight inches, and his bill is two and three fourths inches long.

After the spring flights into the twilight sky, already described, the boy saw little of the woodcock until the open season in September. He might

occasionally flush him in the corn field just at dusk, where he would be boring for worms. Or he might run across him while fishing, for the woodcock haunts small streams where there is alder and wil-

Mrs. Woodcock on Her Nest

low cover and soft loam to bore in, but otherwise he is very retiring.

Mrs. Woodcock is not particular about her nest, and almost any depression under the edge of an old

log, or beside a stone, will do. Here she lays her eggs in May and sits drowsily upon them. The young birds are fed on angleworm mush until they are large enough to shift for themselves and draw their own worms from the loam with their long bills.

When the hunting season opens, — and it is anywhere from the first of September to the middle of October, varying in different states, — the woodcock's troubles begin.

Then some crisp morning, when the frost is still on the grass, he will hear the tinkle of a small bell coming in a zigzag manner down the watercourse. This is a setter or pointer working the cover for Mr. Woodcock. The bell is tied to the dog's collar, in order that the hunters may not lose track of him in the thick cover, and may know when he has stopped to point, even if he is out of sight.

Finally the tinkle of the little bell comes so near that it frightens Mr. Woodcock, and he rises on whistling wings.

Then a deafening roar, new to his ears, breaks the silence of the autumn, and the woodcock is lucky if he does not feel the sting of small pellets.

The woodcock's departure from this to warmer climes is rarely witnessed, for he leaves in the darkness, flying twenty or thirty miles each night, and thus working his way gradually to the south. One

little glimpse at the woodcock's fleeting wings a small boy got one autumn night, as he was going home from a neighbor's.

The night was quite dark, and the boy hugged his lantern close, feeling that it was a sort of charm that kept off bugaboos and hobgoblins.

It was about the middle of November, and the air was clear and crisp. By the roadside was a fringe of witch-hazel, and its delicious wild fragrance filled the night with subtle sweetness.

Suddenly the boy heard a low, tremulous, whistling sound, and a woodcock whirred through the darkness a few feet above his head. The boy could see his brown coat and long bill by the light of the lantern; besides, there was no mistaking the sound of his wings, once it could be distinguished. Then another woodcock followed the first, and then a long procession of the birds, sometimes flying singly, a rod or so apart, and sometimes two or three in a bunch.

The boy stood perfectly still and listened, holding his lantern up so that he might see the woodcock as they passed. For at least two minutes the procession kept up a steady whistle of wings, till the last bird whirred by into the gloom, and the sound of his wings died away. It was a large colony of woodcock taking their nocturnal flight southward.

The woodcock is sometimes indiscriminately called a snipe. Many characteristics that he has in common with the snipe have given rise to various names that are applied to him, in which the term snipe is used, — such as blind snipe, mud snipe, whistling snipe, jack snipe, and the like. But the woodcock is no more a snipe than he is a sandpiper, although he belongs to the same genus and has some characteristics in common with both these birds.

But his weight, shape, and color all declare him to be a distinct species, and entitled to a name and place of his own. His cry of alarm, which he rarely utters, — "Beef, beef," is also quite different from the "Scape, scape," of the Wilson Snipe.

The Tripod Fox

It was a clear crisp morning in October, with just chill enough in the air to set the blood tingling and to whet the appetite. There had been a hard frost the night before, and along the little water courses and in other low places there was a white lacework of frost suggestive of what the cold would do a few weeks later.

Reynard, the red fox, was following a small stream up the wind, looking for his breakfast. This was

his favorite way of hunting, for it gave him the advantage both of seeing and smelling, so if the wind had been in the opposite direction he would have hunted down stream instead of up.

His appetite was very keen this morning, and thus far he had merely sharpened it with a field mouse. By the side of an old log he had got the scent, and after poking about under the log with his paw he had frightened the little creature out into his open mouth.

If you had told Reynard that it was a fine thing to have a good appetite, he might have replied sarcastically that it depended on how plentiful game was and what luck one had in hunting.

A heavy flight of woodcock had come in the night before from the north, and every now and then he flushed one of the birds. This made his hunting interesting, even if there was little likelihood that he could surprise another as he had done the week before. This sleepy old woodcock had been boring for angleworms in the loam, and had just located one when Reynard happened along. The bird had thrust his bill into the mud until the mushy loam came up to his eyes, and so he did not see the fox behind him. Just as he pulled the worm up, the fox sprang. The worm escaped, but it was quite otherwise with the woodcock.

Once this morning the wary fox had got a slight whiff of man scent at a stony place in the brook. The scent was faint, and after making a thorough examination he had concluded that it was old, and had gone on hunting, merely crossing to the other

The Worm Escaped

side of the brook as a precaution that was easily taken.

Presently he got a good whiff of game scent from up stream, and stealthily advanced upon it. His nostrils were extended, his hungry yellow eyes ablaze, and his whole frame quivering with excite-

ment. As he drew nearer he crouched low to the ground, going almost upon his belly. Then the wind freshened and he got a whiff of bird scent so strong that there was no mistaking it.

A few more crouching, creeping steps brought

A Sparrow Hanging

the fox out into a small open spot, where the brook broadened into a pool five or six feet across. There, just over the middle of the pool, a foot or so above the water, was a sparrow hanging head down and quite motionless.

Reynard's first impulse was to spring, but as the

bird neither fluttered nor moved this impulse was checked, and he fell to considering.

It was very queer that a bird could sustain itself in mid air without using its wings. It also was not afraid of him. This, too, was strange. Then the fox noticed a small straight twig running from the bird's feet up into the branches of the tree that overhung the brook.

Was the bird holding to this, or was the twig holding the bird? This last seemed more likely, for the bird must be dead, as it neither fluttered nor chirped.

It was a very handy breakfast, almost providential, in fact, but there was something about it that the fox did not like. He was accustomed to working for his board, and having the meal thus set before him without price seemed queer.

Then he sniffed the bank up and down the little stream for thirty feet. There seemed to be no man scent. He crossed over and tried the other side. This, too, was untainted. After all, perhaps it was all right.

Once he thought he got a suggestion of man scent from a broken twig, but finally concluded that it was the taint he had got further down the brook that still lingered in his nostrils.

The bird was too far out over the water for him to reach it from shore, but there was a convenient stone,

covered with a bit of moss, half way between him and his breakfast. This would make good footing. A fox never wets his feet if he can help it, and he would use this stepping-stone.

He paused a moment with one paw uplifted as he reached for the bird. It was all too strangely easy. He would have felt better about it if the bird had fluttered. Then he would have sprung upon it and torn it to bits without hesitation.

Pooh! what was the use of questioning the good fortune that had made his breakfast come easy for once, so he stepped boldly out upon the moss.

Then something jumped from out the water and caught his leg just above the first joint so quickly that he knew not how it was done. With a lightning spring he bounded backwards, bringing a long snakelike thing out of the brook after him and a queer looking clam upon his paw.

Whe-e-e-w! How it bit! He snapped at it, and shook his paw, but it still clung. Then he bit at it furiously. It did not bite back, but it was so hard that it hurt his teeth, which seemed to make no impression upon it. The bones of a rabbit or partridge would have been ground to powder by those strong jaws, but this strange clam did not seem to mind them. But he would soon shake it off, and he spun round and round, snapping and snarling, even

crossing to the other side of the brook. But the snakelike thing followed him, and the clam bit harder and harder. He would see what effect water had on it; perhaps he could drown it. He held the clam under water for a minute or two, but it still nipped him, and the snakelike thing followed as before.

Perhaps if he could kill this noisy thing that rattled after him everywhere he went, the clam would let go his paw, so he attacked the chain furiously, but it was as hard as ever and the clam seemed only to mock him.

Then he lay down and licked his throbbing paw, and wondered vaguely how it had happened. He was always careful, but this evidently was some strange device to kill him.

True, there had been no man scent, but Reynard, the red fox, did not know that the trapper had walked in the brook for several rods to the spot where he had set the trap, and that he had not stepped out of the water all the while he was doing it; that he had held the bird in a new pocket handkerchief while he slipped the noose over its feet, so as to leave no scent, and had returned the same way. So whatever scent was left in setting the trap, the brook had carried down stream.

Reynard had discovered the point where the

trapper had left the brook, but it was so far away from the trap and the scent was so faint that he had failed to connect the two. Besides, moss usually grew on stones in the brook, and the whole arrangement fitted together nicely.

Then a twig snapped in the bushes, and a wild terror seized Reynard. It was some one connected with this contrivance who was coming to do him further harm. He cowered upon the ground and lay very still. It was only a rabbit hopping through the bushes. Ordinarily he would have crept stealthily after him, but now his own troubles engrossed his entire attention.

At each rustle of the wind in the leaves his fears increased. The "rat-a-tat" of a woodpecker in a tree near by made him jump, but now his paw no longer pained him, for it was getting numb. It really felt as though he had no leg below the first joint.

He wriggled and twisted, bit and tore; lay upon the ground and shook his paw, sprang suddenly into the air, crossed from one side of the brook to the other, and tried every stratagem known to fox cunning, but all to no purpose, for the ugly clam still held his paw with a grip like death.

Foam dripped from his lips, and his eyes grew wild and bloodshot. His breath came hard and

fast, while in his heart fear contended with sullen rage for mastery. He was very thirsty, but did not dare drink in the brook, for he thought it would do him some harm. The fields and woods had seemed so free and wild an hour before, and now they were filled with terror. This bit of a demon on his paw had changed everything.

After one of these wild plunges, in which he shook himself, rolled and tumbled, snapped and snarled, he bit at his paw in sheer desperation. It did not hurt so much as he had expected, and a new idea came to him. If he could not get his paw from the strange creature's mouth, he might leave the part it had hold of, and escape on three legs.

He lay down again for a moment, to get back his wind and courage, and then with a few sharp crunches of his jaws severed the limb, and was free, minus the torn and bleeding forepaw in the trap. Free to hop off on three legs into the woods. But he left a bloody trail on ferns and leaves, and many a tuft of moss was painted crimson.

It would never do to bleed like this. Already he was getting weak, so he made his way cautiously to a spring that he knew of near by. Cold water was good to stop bleeding and to draw out fever and pain. He had learned this the summer before when he had stuck a bramble in his foot. So he dipped

his paw in the spring, taking care this time not to step on any mossy stones.

When the cold water had partially stopped the bleeding and relieved the pain a little, he went away to look for a balsam tree, to apply a favorite remedy that his mother had made use of when he was a young fox, and had cut his face on swale grass.

He soon found the desired tree, and broke open several of the blisters with his teeth. The day was becoming warm by this time, the sun being two or three hours high, and the balsam flowed freely. This he lapped up with his tongue and applied to the ragged stump. The balsam was very sticky, and held the ragged ends of skin over the broken bone, which luckily had snapped at the joint, leaving a fairly smooth end.

Besides sticking down the skin over the end of bone, the balsam helped to check the bleeding. In half an hour's time he had stopped the blood and made a very respectable stump with these simple remedies. A man with all his knowledge of bandages and splints might have bled to death in the same predicament.

Then he went away into the deep woods, to let Nature do the rest. He found a scrub spruce with low-hanging branches; this would screen him from curious eyes while he took a nap. He crawled in

under the friendly branches, and lay down to sleep. For a long time the mutilated stump throbbed so that he could not rest, but he bore it grimly with set teeth, and finally fell asleep from sheer exhaustion.

When he awoke it was night. The stars were shining brightly above him. He could see them winking and blinking through the tree tops, and the night wind was sighing softly in the pines.

He was ravenously hungry, and his leg throbbed with renewed energy. He was also lame in every joint from the wrenching that he had got in the trap.

There seemed to be no way of gratifying his appetite, for his lameness would not permit of his hunting. Under other circumstances he would have crossed the mountain and gone into the meadow to hunt mice on so bright a night, but now this was out of the question.

But his aching member and his hunger would not let him rest, and he hobbled painfully about hoping to find food in some unexpected manner. Presently he heard a rustling in the underbrush, and two other foxes crept cautiously out into the moonlight, coming directly towards him. Reynard at once recognized them as his litter brother and sister whom he had not seen for two days.

How lucky it was they had appeared at this time! Here was aid at last.

Reynard greeted his brother and sister with a short bark expressive of joy and surprise, and they came quickly to him, but drew back uncertain at the sight of his mutilated leg. The three-legged fox held up his wounded member imploringly, licking it, that they might see his suffering. But at the sight, his own brother and sister drew back and snarled at him. He was different from what he had been before. He was maimed and no longer one of them. He was a cripple, an outcast, and not worthy of their friendship.

Then the wounded fox was treated to a most cruel illustration of the barbaric law of the survival of the fittest, which is carried out so rigorously in the woods, and which at once debars maimed and crippled animals from the rights and privileges of their kind. His own litter brother and sister set upon him furiously, snapping and biting at his wounded limb, and showing him plainly that henceforth they would recognize him only as an outcast.

At first great astonishment possessed the fox, then outraged fury, and he backed up against a tree and defended himself in a manner that made his assailants draw away to a respectful distance. He was really much larger than they, and had been something of a bully before his accident, but clearly his day had passed.

From that time on he was known to both man and beast as the three-legged fox, an outcast and a vagrant, hated and tormented by his own family, and hunted and dogged by men.

In time he learned to travel very well on three legs, but he never could conceal his identity. If any boy on his way to school saw a ragged fox track he would at once tell the other boys that the tripod fox had crossed the night before up in Jenkins's pasture. If the snow was soft one of the paw prints was always deeper than the others, and if it was very deep you could see where the stump dragged in the snow.

Hunters were glad to find this ragged fox track in fresh snow, for they always felt sure that their hound would catch the lame fox within an hour after starting him. Many stories were told by fox hunters of how they "almost bagged" the tripod fox, but he wore his hide just the same, and defied them to the end of the chapter.

He never could excel in the long, hard chase, for his lameness prevented that, so his wits had to make up what he lacked in fleetness. There were many kinds of hunting, too, that he had to forego, but he developed a cunning and resourcefulness that were not matched by any other fox in the county.

His method was usually the ambush, or still hunt,

and he rarely stalked his game as other foxes did. His hunting took patience and long waiting, but he usually got his game.

He would lie for hours in some hollow beside a woodland path where the autumn winds had piled up leaves until they were deep enough to cover him, his nose and eyes just showing, so he could see and not be seen. You might have watched the pile of leaves, that so well matched his own reddish yellow coat, and not see them move for an hour, but let some luckless rabbit or squirrel come jumping along the path and the fox would spring from the pile like a flash and have his prey before it was aware.

At other times he would lie behind an old log for an entire afternoon watching the squirrels playing in the trees and spying out where they hid their mast. If he saw that a squirrel was hiding his store under the roots of a tree, he would mark the spot in his mind, and take his place just one spring from the hole, behind the trunk. There he would stand like a statue, his hungry yellow eyes glued upon the hole. He never shifted his position or seemed to get cramped, for he knew better than you or I do that a motionless object in the woods is very hard to discover. And when the long watched for game appeared, he rarely missed it. In the same way he had spied out a cock partridge's drumming log, and

by lying close under one side of it where it was rotten, he surprised this most wary of birds and pinioned him before he could move a wing.

Partridge Drumming

Mice hunting he also carried on successfully, but his specialty was thieving about farmhouses, where great caution had to be exercised, and only a fox with wits could go continuously and keep his brush.

There he had not only to guard against traps but also against the farm dog. And as he was not swift of foot, he would fare badly in a race for life. This being the case, he usually reconnoitered the premises to be robbed, and discovered whether there was a dog upon the place. If he found that it was guarded in that way, he would look for a farmhouse that had no dog.

On one occasion he misjudged the premises and was surprised in the very act of robbing a hencoop, by the canine protector of the place. It was lucky for him that the dog was a coward, and retreated with a gashed face before the battle had really begun, or his coat might have suffered.

I have discussed the point with many old fox hunters, and I cannot discover that a dog was ever known to draw first blood in a fight with a fox. The fox is so much quicker and more subtle than the domestic animal that he always gets that advantage. I do not think that a dog ever killed a fox without carrying a scar or two by which to remember the battle. Of course, a fox when cornered is no match for a gritty dog, but he is game from the quivering tip of his nose to the end of his bushy tail.

Every spring the meadows at the eastern side of the mountain where the tripod fox made his headquarters were covered with water. The river at the

foot of the mountain being swollen, Reynard would indulge in his most exciting sport, which was duck hunting.

He would sit upon a convenient point about twenty rods up the side of the mountain, and watch the waters below, until he was able to mark down some ducks in a position that suited his purpose. He wanted them near shore, preferably where some point or bush would cover his approach. Then he would slip swiftly down the mountain side and enter the water twenty rods or so from the game.

If he could keep a floating tree or some other object between himself and the feeding ducks so much the better. Otherwise he would have to swim very slowly, with just the point of his nose showing above the water. He had to be careful not to make ripples, for the ducks were wary. When he had reached the bush or point as near as he could get, while using the greatest caution he would stop a few seconds to draw a deep breath, for the final swim took good lung power, and he might have to hold his nose entirely under water for the last two or three rods.

The ducks were usually busy feeding, diving and bobbing about, so that when one of their number suddenly went under, they thought nothing of it if there was no splash or squawk, and Reynard took

care that there should not be. Once under water he crushed the life out of his victim with a powerful crunch of his jaws and went noiselessly away to the point to hide the first victim and return for another. He rarely got the second duck, but it was worth the attempt, for the tripod fox was a hunter and delighted in the chase.

Besides losing his right forepaw in the trap the tripod fox had two other trying experiences during this eventful autumn, both of which tended to confirm him in the cynicism that was rapidly growing upon him. The first of these events was as follows:

One evening just at dusk Reynard came to a spring which was his favorite drinking place. The water was always cold and fresh, and never tasted swampy, as some springs did.

He was hungry as well as thirsty. The rabbit plague had done its deadly work among the cottontails the year before, and they would not be very plentiful again until the second or third year after the plague. Reynard did not know this, but he knew that rabbits were scarce, and that it was not so easy hunting them as it would be after the deep snows came.

This evening he found both meat and drink at the spring, for there were several generous pieces of meat strewn about, but his suspicions were at once

aroused. The meat had not been there the night before, and it was quite strong of man scent. He could also see where each piece had been slit, and here the scent was strongest. There was also another rank odor at each of the slits.

With his trap experience so fresh in his mind he would have passed the alluring feast by had he not been so hungry. For a while he considered, nosing the pieces of meat about. Then he selected the one which had the least taint about it and ate it, then went quickly away as though he dared not trust himself longer near the meat.

He had no sooner swallowed the tempting bit than he was filled with misgivings. There did not seem to be any immediate injury from it, but he felt instinctively that some subtle danger lurked near anything that had man scent about it.

He knew of a pungent plant that would cause him to throw up the meat if he could only find some of it, but he searched the woods in vain. He could find it any day when he did not want it, but now it seemed to have suddenly disappeared. By this time an hour had elapsed since he had eaten the meat, and he began to feel ill. It was burning him up and making him dizzy. He then knew that his cunning enemy man had again got him in his clutches.

He rushed hurriedly to the brook and drank until he could drink no more. But his thirst could not be satisfied, and the deadly sickness grew upon him.

Then by some good fortune or inspiration he thought of a very old remedy, and began eating grass ravenously. The relief was not immediate, but this simple emetic took effect in half an hour, although enough of the poison had got into his system to make him thoroughly ill for the rest of the day, which he spent quietly lying under a bush.

But this was one more of the hard lessons he was learning by experience. Never again would he touch meat with man scent upon it, — not even if he starved.

The other experience from which he learned new caution was not so much his fault, and merely one of those accidents that frequently enter into the best ordered life of a fox.

He was crossing a laurel swamp one morning. The snows had come, and bushes and boughs were bending under their load. He was following a rabbit path which was the rabbits' principal highway through the swamp, their main traveled road, as one might say, with lesser thoroughfares branching out in every direction. Reynard was quite absorbed in the rabbit scent, which was fresh, and

was not exercising his usual precaution, for not even a fox can be interested in several things at a time.

Presently he got a whiff of man scent that made his nerves start, but he kept very quiet. The scent came to him from down the wind, so the object scented must be very near. Then the woods resounded with a roar that echoed again and again, and a score of hornets stung the tripod fox in as many places. There was no need of keeping quiet any longer when such noises were abroad, and the fox broke cover, running for his life.

Again the roar resounded through the woods, and again the hornets stung him, but not so freely as before. Over and under bushes he sprang, running and jumping in a manner that would have done credit to a four-legged fox, and soon left the swamps far behind, but he did not stop running until he reached a ledge near the mountain top, where he had his home.

This was his first experience with the deadly thunder stick, man's long arm with which he reaches out for the wild things that he cannot catch in any other way. The hornet stings in his coat continued to smart for the rest of the day, and his hide was sore for some time, but the tripod fox felt that he was lucky to escape even with this inconvenience and so did not mind.

Later on in the day he heard a strange wild noise like the cry of some animal down in the laurel swamp, and the same ominous roar, but it was faint and far away. The following year he learned that the weird sounds were the cry of an animal with which man chased both foxes and rabbits, and that the resounding roar was a man's voice, with which he said to wild creatures, "Stop! I want your hide. It does not belong to you, it is mine."

The hunter had spoken just as loudly to the tripod fox on this occasion as he ever spoke, but the shot had been intended for rabbits instead of foxes, and as this ammunition was not large enough to break bones or to pierce his vitals, Reynard had escaped with a score of little pellets in his coat. Had the gun been loaded with number four shot instead of sevens, the eventful life of the tripod fox would probably have been cut short at that time, and the fox club in the village beyond the river would have been saved many a futile chase.

The three-legged fox was always at a disadvantage in a straight away race for life, and this he never attempted, unless there was a crust on the snow just hard enough to bear him and let the hounds through.

No one who has not seen Reynard divested of his fine reddish-yellow overcoat knows what a slight fellow he is. The leanest greyhound is fat com-

pared with him. His legs are no bigger than those of a cat, while his body at the greatest girth is not much larger around than a man's forearm. Seeing him with his coat on, the novice estimates the fox's weight from twenty to thirty pounds, while in reality it ranges from eight to twelve pounds.

The closest call that the tripod fox ever had, and one that was long talked of by the hunting club, happened in this way.

There was a heavy snow on the ground, and the three-legged fox was down in the valley prowling about some corn stacks that had been left out by a shiftless farmer. He had found plenty of mice there all the fall, and now he wanted one for breakfast.

The club were out too, this morning, and the pack took his track at the foot of the mountain and came on across the field at full cry. The cunning fellow usually would have put for the mountain and taken refuge in one of half a dozen ledges that he had selected carefully during his residence there,—ledges whence he could not be dug out and where he would be comparatively safe. But to-day the pack was between him and the mountain, and he was gradually pressed farther and farther from his stronghold.

The snow was deep and moist, making his coat heavy and his one forepaw slumped badly. He

was getting winded, and all the time the pack was gaining on him. At last he reached some spruces, covering an acre or two of pasture. He might snarl the track a bit here, and gain a few rods, so he gave some of his most scientific twists, and came out on the other side just as the pack entered, thirty rods behind him.

He stopped a moment to consider. There was safety in the mountain a mile away. He could never reach it in this snow without being caught. Then there was a noise in the road, and he slunk back behind a bush, but all the time the cries of the hounds came nearer.

While he stood uncertain and desperate, a log team passed in the road, within a rod or two of him. This was the noise he had heard. There was one log at the bottom of the load longer than the rest, making just such a seat as boys like to ride to school on without having the driver, who is perched high on the load at the front, know they are there.

The desperate fox saw his chance and took it.

He sprang into the road behind the team and three or four of his three-legged jumps landed him on the long log. There he crouched, his reddish coat matching the color of the spruce log nicely.

Just as the pack of hounds broke into the open the log team rounded a bend in the road, and a moment

later the air was filled with perplexed howls from the baffled pack.

A small boy, dinner pail in hand, was trudging to school, and he came into the road behind the log team from a cross path. He saw what he thought

The Escape of the Fox

to be a collie dog riding upon the log at the back of the load. Almost at the same instant the supposed dog raised his head and saw the boy. Then he jumped lightly off and disappeared in the bushes, and the boy saw that the supposed collie was a fox.

It was not until his fifth year that the tripod fox

met Fuzzy, the one oasis in his desert life. Fuzzy was three years old, and she alone of all his kindred seemed to overlook his infirmity. Presently four little kit foxes made their appearance, and the tripod fox was the proudest sire for many miles around. He made longer excursions into the valley than ever he had before, for he had to hunt for the family, and many a henhouse paid tribute to the little fox family up in the mountain.

One of the young foxes died during its kittenhood, but the rest grew finely and were well favored young foxes when the first frosts toughened their hides and made them fit for the fox club's taking.

The annual fox hunt, which was to be followed by a banquet in the evening, took place about the first of November. A horseman with a bugle had awakened the fox hunters at four A. M., and the men and the pack were off at five.

Fuzzy and the youngsters had gone into the meadows to look for quail that morning at about three o'clock. They had occasionally found a bevy of them where the quail had spent the night, sleeping in a bunch, and the foxes had made several good meals this autumn in that way.

So they trailed the quail, but the pack trailed them, and at five-thirty the hounds were in full cry.

In some way the young foxes got separated from

their mother, and ran recklessly about without any other purpose than to keep out of reach of the noisy pack. As the club said, "They were just old enough to play nicely."

By seven o'clock the pelts of two of them were dangling from the pockets of lucky hunters, and the third fox, who had also been shot at, bolted, and the hounds went out of hearing. They came back after about two hours, for a pack will not follow a fox as far straight across country as a single hound. But the young fox, who had been badly scared, was never seen in that part of the country again.

Once more the tripod fox felt himself an Ishmaelite in the land of his fathers, and something of his old moroseness came back to him. But still he had Fuzzy, and she alone was the joy of his lonely life. December and January crawled by. It was a very hard winter, and the fox family had all they could do to keep down the pangs of hunger that gnawed at their vitals. Rabbits were scarce, and there were no sudden thaws and freezes to catch partridge under the snow crust, where the foxes could find and dig them out.

They did occasionally get one that had plunged under the soft snow to keep warm, some bitter night, but one partridge would not satisfy a couple of hungry foxes long.

They were finally obliged to go to neighboring farmhouses more frequently than they liked to. There they would occasionally find a dead hen that had been thrown upon a compost heap, or a calf that had been dragged into the lots for the crows and foxes.

About this time came the January thaw, which was late, and after it a hard freeze and a fine crust.

One morning Fuzzy went into the meadows to feast upon a dead horse. The fox club had drawn the dead horse into the meadows as a decoy, where they could start a fox without so much trouble as they would otherwise have to take. The club got out early the same morning that Fuzzy made her trip to the dead horse, and the pack at once took her track. Seven members of the fox club were out, and they patrolled the meadows thoroughly, each posted at some likely spot for a fox to cross.

It was a cold, crisp morning, and each hunter had stamped out a spot two or three feet square to stand in, and kicked the snow off his feet to keep them from getting cold. The men wore fur caps and gloves and carried shotguns. They all waited impatiently for the cry of the pack, and whenever it came near a waiting hunter he would draw the glove from his right hand and cock his gun.

Half way back to the mountain Fuzzy ran upon

one of the hunters, and had a close shave for her life. Her coming had not been announced by the pack, and the sportsman was not ready for her. His glove fumbled the trigger, and as the fox was on low ground he shot over her, but the roar of the gun rolled across the meadows and echoed from hilltop to hilltop. The tripod fox heard it on the mountain and was anxious, so he came out at the top of a cliff under a small spruce to watch and listen.

Presently he heard the pack in full cry and saw a small yellow speck coming straight for the mountain about half a mile away. It was Fuzzy. She was running well, and the pack was fifty rods behind. She would make the mountain nicely, if no unseen hunter intervened.

The tripod fox strained every nerve to watch the race for life of his mate. The pack did not gain upon her, and he felt sure that she would make it. It was fine running for both dog and fox, and the pack swept across the meadows like the wind.

Fuzzy was now within a quarter of a mile of the foot of the mountain. Her mate from his hiding-place under the spruce saw nothing but clear fields before her and smiled broadly at the thought of her triumph. Then he saw a team driving rapidly across the meadows, the horses going at a gallop. On the seat beside the driver was a tall, gaunt hound

that the tripod fox did not remember to have seen before.

The team was driving to head off the pack where it would cross the road forty rods from the foot of the mountain. The man was holding the hound by the collar, and the dog was straining and tugging to get free. Then the pack crossed the road just ahead of the team, and the man let go the hound. With great bounds that ate up distance like an express train he came after the pack, overtook it, and drew nearer and nearer to the flying fox. The tripod fox saw the new danger, and gritted his teeth and strained his sight, that no movement might escape him.

Fuzzy redoubled her efforts and drew away from the pack, but the gaunt hound closed rapidly in upon her. Only four or five rods now separated them. Twice Fuzzy doubled and the gaunt monster ran by her, but the third time he reached over and closed his lank jaws upon her back and threw her over backwards, where she lay limp upon the snow. She did not rise again, for her back had been broken as though it had been a reed.

The hound's owner came up just in time to save the fox pelt from the pack that came thundering on to congratulate the greyhound upon his quick run and brilliant finish.

All were glad except the red fox on the mountain, who went sullenly back to his lonely den.

Four times during the coming week the tripod fox witnessed the same tragedy in the valley below, — the pack in full cry, the flying fox, and the hideous

Fuzzy's Last Run

monster that came in at the finish and picked up the fox with ease.

The hunter who carried the tall hound with him lived at the end of the bridge over the river. The watching fox saw them go there each day after the hunt. It was something to know where his

enemy lived, for he could be on the lookout for him.

About the last of February the tripod fox found some small pieces of meat strewn about a spring. It was very strong of man scent, and he knew it would not be good for him to eat it. He had never forgotten the lesson of the meat that made him sick. But after considering for a while he carefully took two of the largest pieces and trotted off through the dark.

He skirted the river until he came to the long dark tunnel or bridge the hound's owner always used in crossing. Ordinarily he would not have dreamed of crossing in this way, and would have gone over on the ice, but to-night he was filled with a reckless daring and a wild exultation that feared nothing.

He trotted across the bridge to the house at the farther end where the great hound lived. He had reconnoitered the premises a few nights before when the moon was up, and knew the lay of the land. He even knew where his enemy slept.

There was a little house under an open shed. It had a swing door, and a chain rattled when the hound moved. The wary fox had found out all this by standing upon the wall across the road and giving a couple of sharp barks. The door in the little house had suddenly been pushed up, and the

head of the lank hound thrust out, while the chain rattled. This was all the fox wanted to know, so he had gone quietly away.

To-night he crept carefully into the shed and laid the two pieces of meat that he had carried so gingerly, as near the dog house as he dared to. He went so near that he could even hear his enemy breathing. He was quite aware of the risk he ran, but did not care. It would be as well to die in a hazardous enterprise as to be picked up on the meadows some morning where there was no chance for life.

When he had placed the meat by the door of the kennel, he went back into the road and gave two or three sharp barks as he had done before. He heard the door of the little house come up with a bang and the chain rattle, but it was so dark that he could not see anything of his enemy. He had done all he could, and so trotted quietly away, this time crossing on the ice instead of by the bridge.

The greyhound was never seen again in the chase upon the plains, and with him went all the good luck that the club had known this season. The members had taken fifteen foxes, of which he had caught twelve. He had only failed in one instance to catch the fox when he got sight of him, and this one had gone under the ice at an open spot in the river and had not come out again.

The tripod fox saw from his mountain cliff that the greyhound was missing at the next hunt, and he smiled broadly and licked his chops. He also saw the pursued fox scurry away across the meadow and get out of hearing, with the pack in full pursuit. It gave him delight to know that if the greyhound had been there the fox would have been caught in the open. Now he would escape.

This revenge was very sweet to the three-legged fox, and he wanted more of it. They had not paid the price of Fuzzy's death yet, so he schemed and bided his time.

The first of March was exceptionally warm, and brought rain, and then a sharp frost, which left a crust like ice. This was what the tripod fox was waiting for. So he went into the valley early one morning and left his trail in all likely places and then came back to the foot of the mountain and waited. One hour, two hours went by, and still he sat there upon his haunches waiting.

Just as the sun was peeping over the eastern hills he heard the cry of the pack, and again that broad smile overspread his crafty countenance.

The club was out in full force to-day, for it was to be the last hunt of the season, and everyone wished to bag as many pelts as possible to swell the total of the year's brushes. The red fox, sitting

on his haunches at the foot of the mountain, waited until the pack got within twenty or thirty rods of him before he began the ascent. The hounds were slipping and sliding on the crust, but the fox picked out the best path for them up the mountain side that he could find. By keeping under the trees, where icicles had frozen to the crust and where the rain had not fallen so freely, he found good footing for them. Up, up they went, the fox leading by a few rods, and the pack following eagerly. Occasionally the hounds caught sight of the fox leisurely climbing a few rods ahead of them, and the valley below echoed with their full-throated cry. The waiting hunters on the crossroads wondered. A fox had never taken the dogs up into the mountain in that way before, and they were surprised that the pack could follow him up the ascent on such a crust.

Half way up Reynard stopped and waited, to give the pack a good look at him, and to encourage it in the ascent. This time he let the dogs get within four or five rods of him. He did not climb any higher, but ran along the side of the mountain for a short distance.

Just opposite a small scrub spruce he stopped and again waited for the pack. From where he sat he could not see what was beyond the little spruce,

but half a mile away was the meadow and the broad river.

On came the pack bellowing wildly, but the red fox sat quietly waiting its coming. The climb had been slow and the pack was nicely together, and swept along the mountain side to the waiting fox almost in a bunch.

There he sat like a statue, grimly inviting it on. With yelps and snarls of eagerness the dogs rushed upon him, but he barely eluded them, slipping and sliding just ahead of them toward the scrub spruce. They followed him excitedly, in fact they could do nothing else once they had started down the slippery incline.

One of the hunters in the valley below saw the pack following along the side of the mountain, but just at the scrub spruce, which looked like a bush from where he stood, he lost sight of it and waited for its reappearance. Although he could not see the dogs he knew by their cries that they were close upon the fox, and he fully expected them to catch him, if he did not hole, which foxes occasionally did in the mountains.

He was still straining his eyes and waiting expectantly, when a yellow speck, that his trained sight told him was a fox, shot out over the perpendicular cliff, and fell three hundred feet upon the rocks

below. It was still in the air when a white object much larger followed it. This had not struck when a black and white form fell. The hunter gasped, but was too thunderstruck to speak. Then two more dogs shot over the cliff simultaneously, a fifth followed, and a second later the entire pack of five

The Fox's Last Jump

dogs, valued by the club at two hundred dollars, was lying upon the rocks, most of the hounds too mangled even to kick in their death moments.

The reddish-yellow pelt of the tripod fox was among the black and white of the pack, but never before had the skin of a solitary fox cost such a

price as that which the club paid for the pelt of the tripod fox

Two Lords of the Forest

Two massive interlocked sets of antlers that stand guard in the hallway of my old friend Williams's house, in whose congenial company I have spent many hours in the woods and on streams and lakes, set me thinking of the following story of the great battle, which only the ancient trees and a few frightened small creatures saw.

We were crossing a tamarack swamp on our way

Locked Antlers

to a distant lonely lake, where, by the way, we were never lonely, and had stopped under an overhanging fir to rest and enjoy the wild beauty of the swamp. The vegetation was very rank in this mossy

fastness, even the trees had festooned themselves with long silvery streamers of moss that floated to and fro in the slight breeze of the summer morning. As light as thistle down it seemed, and it gave the

The Friendly Fir

dark spruces and tamaracks the semblance of veiled nuns.

The busy life of the hard woods did not penetrate very freely to the swamp, so the birds and squirrels were not numerous here.

As we sat under the friendly fir musing and admiring, I began poking in the moss with my foot, which soon struck something hard. This whetted

my curiosity, and I poked away the moss and by degrees unearthed a hard, hornlike knob which extended further and further down into the mold.

Williams did not at first notice what I was about, but before I had guessed the truth he jumped to his feet, shouting excitedly, "Antlers! and a tremendous pair, too!"

We saw that it was no use to dig with our hands, so we found some dry broken limbs and set to work in earnest. The more we dug, the larger grew our find, and the greater grew our astonishment, until in an hour or two we had unearthed one of the finest trophies that the old forest ever yielded up to curious man.

It was a gigantic double set of antlers locked in deadly embrace, and behind each was the skull bone and the bony outline of the combatant. Here was the story of a tragedy beside which the combats of the knights of old became struggles of pygmies.

Williams went to look for a pole upon which to carry our prize between us, and I sat under the tamarack musing.

Then it was that the wood nymph, sweet custodian of the forest, and the gentle guardian of the wild things, came tripping down the aisles of the ancient forest and paused before me, to see if I were one of those dread hunters who stalk the woods and kill

twice what they need, for mere sport. When she saw that I was a peaceful citizen, carrying merely a fishing tackle and a revolver, she told me the tale of the double antlers. And this is what I heard in the primeval forest, with the deep shade of fir tree above me and the moist mold of dead leaves under my feet.

Five years before, in the region of our beautiful woodland lake, lived a moose known to hunters as the Tall Bull of the Umbago. His wanderings, especially in springtime, carried him far into the adjacent region, but he always returned in the mating season to the lonely lake. Sometimes he would bring his mate with him from the great Barrens to the north, or frequently he would find her along some of the water courses that fed the lake.

The Tall Bull of the Umbago was both the envy and despair of hunters. It was said he could detect at once the hollow sham of the best moose call, and he was so wary and his life was so well ordered that he had rarely felt the sting of lead, and had never been hard hit. While in his own domain, as lord of the Umbago country, he reigned supreme. Occasionally a reckless bull, perhaps not knowing his danger or not fearing it, would stray into the lake country, but he usually left in hot haste, badly mauled and beaten, or else was borne down and

beaten into a mass of pulp beneath the big bull's hoofs.

Forty miles to the south, along the course of two rivers, one coming from the mountains and one from the Barrens, and both meeting in the marsh country, dwelt the White Ghost, the great albino bull who

The Tall Bull of the Umbago

was half a myth and half a reality in the settlements. Those who had seen him averred that he was fully a half larger than the average moose, while those who had not, said he was a phantom, or the wild conjuring of spirits and water.

Like the Tall Bull of the Umbago country, the White Ghost knew no equal and tolerated no rival

along the water course and in the foothills where he ranged.

One autumn, when the forest was ablaze with color and the moonlight of Indian summer had warmed the blood in the veins of the bull moose, the Tall Bull of the Umbago country set out on a pilgrimage, caring not where he went, so long as he traveled far and feed was good, for that restlessness of the mating season was upon him and he expected somewhere in the great wilderness to hear the call of the cow moose that would summon him to the first of many a tryst under the scarlet forest. On the edge of the great tamarack swamp he heard the call for which he ranged the wilderness, and answered it. Just at the time the Tall Bull left the lake, the White Ghost left the low country and started on a pilgrimage northward, for he, too, had felt the magic of the moon. The fire of the autumn was in his veins and he, too, sought the tryst. The third day of his wanderings he came to the tamarack swamp, where he discovered fresh moose signs, which he followed eagerly. He skirted the swamp for half a mile, and came to a spot where the weeds and ferns were trampled flat as a floor. Moose had evidently spent the night there. So he singled out the fresher of the two tracks leading from the trampled weeds and followed it. Ten minutes more brought him into a clump

of birches a little apart from the swamp, where a moose cow was ravenously cropping the young leaves from a small birch which she held down under her fore leg.

The White Ghost greeted her joyously, but his suit was unwelcome, for the cow let go the birch and

The Cow Moose Feeding

slipped away, without so much as looking back to see who the newcomer might be. For, according to the ethics of the forest, she was bound to the Tall Bull of the Umbago country, and the newcomer was one day too late.

It was tantalizing, when one had come so far, to

have that elusive brown shadow always just one thicket ahead, and the White Ghost's temper was nettled.

He called beseechingly, putting as much pathos and enchantment as could well be expressed in a deep-chested bellow, but the brown shadow fled on. But if his call was not answered by the cow, it did not go unheeded, for the winds wafted it to other ears, and the Tall Bull came shambling through the forest, thrashing the underbrush with his antlers and bellowing with rage.

His precincts were being invaded and his rights usurped. The White Ghost, nothing dismayed, answered with a thundering bellow that made the aisles of the quiet forest resound. This, then, was the secret of his failure, his humiliation. This matter should be contested with horn and hoof. If the newcomer was master of the situation he would need to retain it with strong antlers.

A blind fury like a whirlwind possessed the White Ghost. He would not stand like a calf, or like a two year old awaiting the fray, so he crashed through the underbrush in the direction of his adversary.

Like two battering rams these giants came together, and the woods echoed with the shock of the contact. Each rose upon his hind legs with the

shock of motion suddenly arrested; for a moment like giant wrestlers they stood, and then settled to earth with a heavy thud. Bits of splintered horn flicked the leaves in the tree tops, and the grinding of the massive horns blended strangely with half-stifled bellows of rage and quick hard breaths that ended in a sort of whistle.

The trees shivered with fright and the night winds fled away in fear, but the giants battled on.

There were sudden lunges with the great antlers that crashed together like steel, and there were sudden feints and quick attempts to catch the rival off his guard and lacerate his side with the many-pronged antlers; but each was an adept in antler play, and thrust was parried with thrust, and feint met feint.

It was simply a matter of endurance, and each combatant was determined to humble his adversary or leave his bones on the green carpet that he had trod so proudly.

The underbrush was trampled to bits, and the turf was plowed as though by cavalry. Many a sapling bent and broke with a crack like a pistol as the battle shifted ground. But as the seconds grew to minutes and the minutes to quarter hours, the crash of horns became less frequent and the deep breathing grew louder. Each breath now ended in

a sob. Blood dripped from the nostrils and foam fell from the long upper lips.

It was now fighting at close range; there was snapping of teeth, clicking of hoofs, and deep-throated sobs for breath. Each was alternately on the defensive, but their fury would not let them rest.

The Fight

The bright harvest moon threw scintillating beams into the cavernous woods, that the owl and the night hawk might see this tragedy of the wilderness.

Suddenly the mode of the battle changed. There were backward pulls and wrenchings of the head and terrible twists to the right and left that made the

necks of both combatants crack and hoarse bellows of pain escape their foaming lips. Their antlers were locked in deadly embrace. Now indeed it would be a fight to the finish and of necessity a drawn battle.

All through the night the stars caught fitful peeps of huge forms in the tangle of underbrush. Sometimes the struggle would cease for half an hour and then begin again with renewed fury. But the periods of activity grew less and less frequent until finally they ceased altogether. The combatants were down and there was little left to do but strike savagely with those deep-cutting hoofs, which merely cut the air. Horns and hoofs were now alike unavailing. It was hunger that would humble them.

When the sun shot his first beams into the woods they were still there kicking and thrashing, but their great strength was spent and any wolf that skulked the woods could look down upon them now.

Blowflies and gnats swarmed upon them, all eager for the warm, thick blood. The weasel came out of his hiding and licked the leaves, and all the crawling, creeping things made merry.

A little later crows discovered what was going on, and soon the tree tops were black with their glossy wings, and the air was filled with their cries. The

lynx heard the commotion and came skulking from his lair. Foxes and wildcats would come to the feast, and perhaps a stray wolf would hear of it later.

These two fallen lords of the forest were not yet cold when the scavengers began their business. It was a gruesome thing, dismembering these giants, once so strong and grand in their strength. But it was what always happened, and after all it was a facsimile of man's own battles, — Rome and Carthage warring against each other to their mutual destruction. Nothing of the feast was wasted, for even the bones were polished like ivory, until only the skeletons and the great antlers remained. Then the friendly trees dropped a mantle of leaves over these and the ferns wrapped them about to conceal what had happened. Year after year with loving tendrils and fretted fronds Nature sought to cover up this double tragedy of the forest, and finally the mosses grew where the bones had been, and only the ants and grubs knew what was beneath.

Thus it is with Nature; the grave we dig to-day she seeks to cover up to-morrow with grasses and flowers. So go the rounds of the seasons, man scarring and destroying, and Nature renewing and restoring.

Tow-Head and the Old He-One

The old "He-One" is a quaint New England expression, a little uncouth, perhaps, but most expressive. As I have heard it used, it refers to a trout or other New England game fish of extraordinary size and age.

The particular old "He-One," to whose affairs I will invite your attention, could almost always be

Trout

found under an unpretentious little bridge that spanned one of the best trout brooks into which angler ever cast fly.

What a poem is suggested to the country boy by the magic word "bridge!" Whenever I hear this suggestive word it is always accompanied by the pleasant murmur of running water, and the smell of willow and sweet flag, and the cry of the kingfisher.

When one says "bridge" to the average country boy, he never thinks of those gigantic modern struc-

tures of stone and steel that span the broadest rivers and the deepest chasms, but his thoughts always turn to the quaint little country bridge, perhaps not over twenty or thirty feet in length, whose planks are wheel-worn and dusty, and whose railing is rough and rustic. No country boy can ever pass one of these bridges without stopping to look into the cool fresh waters beneath, no matter how urgent the errand on which he is sent.

Many a half hour I have spent lying on my stomach upon the particular bridge under which the old "He-One" lived. There was some danger of having one's legs run over by a passing team, and one also might pitch headlong into the water, but these things only added zest to the performance.

It was worth walking half a mile any day and lying upon one's stomach in the dust for an hour, just to get one glimpse of this speckled beauty. He would always be standing head up stream, gently fanning the water with his fins and tail. Sometimes a sunbeam would filter through a crack in the bridge and fall full upon him, lighting up the iridescent green and yellow upon his sides and back, and making his spots to shine like gold. Then he was a living jewel. At other times he would stand in the shadow, the dark mottling upon his back looking almost black, but he was always a thing of beauty,

and coveted by all the small boys in the district as a miser covets gold.

Once and only once I hooked him squarely, but he got away after a battle royal of ten minutes. The ruse that I tried upon him this time was a very simple one that I had learned from an old fisherman.

First I located my prize under the bridge and then went up stream and roiled the brook until it was dense with mud. I then dropped in my hook and let it float down with the muddy particles. The worm was merely looped on the hook once to make it look as natural as possible. When the old "He-One" saw the mud coming he probably reasoned in this way:

"Hello, the bank has caved in. How muddy the stream is! My! here comes a fine worm that has fallen in with it. How it kicks and squirms! This is no fisherman's device, but just a providential breakfast, that some clumsy foot has provided for me," and without more ado he took my worm.

I was fishing with a slender pole that I had cut that morning, and of course it was green and limber. At the first wild rush it bent double, and this probably kept the hook from pulling out, as I had no reel and barely ten feet of line.

Back and forth the big trout rushed, while my heart pounded away like a trip hammer, for I was so

excited that I could hardly breathe. Already I saw him lying in the pan of the scales at the country grocery, and a lively crowd of envious boys crowding

I was Fishing with a Slender Pole

about to be sure of his weight. I even went so far as to imagine an item in the next week's paper, all about the small boy who had caught the big trout

that had baffled expert fishermen for years. But even while I dreamed the gut snapped, and the old "He-One" went up stream like a bullet, leaving a long ripple in the water behind him.

I could hardly believe my eyes. I had been so sure of him a minute before, but there was the broken gut and no hook or fish upon it. It was something, though, to have hooked such an old settler, and I made the most of that fact, which was all the consolation that remained to me.

The manner in which Tow-Head hooked and captured the old trout was quite different, and I venture to say that no other old "He-One" was ever taken in quite such a way.

Tow-Head was a ragged, dirty, white-headed urchin of about ten years. His chief characteristic was laziness, and considering this fact the capture of the old trout was a double achievement; for thereby Tow-Head performed an act that forever stilled the tongues of the country youth that had continually wagged about his weakness.

Tow-Head had been sent by his father to plant corn in the neighborhood of the bridge. But on arriving at the field he had seen some crows on a neighboring tree, watching to see just where he planted the corn, that they might go and dig it up. Of course it would have been folly to plant under

such unfavorable circumstances, so Tow-Head hid the seed corn and hoe in a bush and went to the bridge to rest himself with the sound of running water.

There was just room enough to sit upon the end of the planks on the outside of the railing and dangle one's feet over the water, and at the same time rest one's back against the great post that held the railing. It was a rather doubtful perch, but quite safe if one kept his head and was not disturbed by outsiders.

I well remember a hair-raising experience I had on that same perch one morning while fishing. I was wholly employed with angling and did not notice the approach of Uncle Rastus Billings, who was quite a joker in his way.

Suddenly in some unaccountable manner I slipped from my perch and started for a headlong plunge into the brook. But midway in air I was arrested by a violent jerk on my coat, and drawn back to the bridge again. With my heart in my mouth I looked over my shoulder into the grinning face of Uncle Rastus.

"Hello!" he cried, shaking with laughter. "If I hadn't caught you, you would have gone in that time, sure."

He had pushed me off the end of the plank and at

the same time held on to my coat, drawing me back, dangling and kicking like a frog.

This morning when he should have been planting corn, Tow-Head was perched on the end of the plank,

Tow-Head

dangling a fish line in the brook. The sound of the running water and the soft sighing of the wind made Tow-Head sleepy. He was always sleepy, in fact, but this morning particularly so. So he tied his fish line to his big toe, and leaned back against the

post and dozed, and the brook sang him to sleep.

There is something peculiar in the lives of game and fish, something quite unaccountable. A fox will live for years, avoiding the most intricate traps and snares, displaying an ingenuity and cunning that would seem almost incredible to anyone but a woodsman, — to die at last at the hands of a mere boy, or to put his paw deliberately into some trap that he has avoided a hundred times before. In the same way a great fish will avoid every allurement of the most scientific fisherman, and finally succumb to a boy with only a six-foot line and a piece of salt pork on the hook. Whether they tire of the game that they have so long played and walk deliberately into the snare, or whether it is a fit of temporary madness, I cannot say, but the fact may often be noted both in field and stream.

Suddenly Tow-Head's nap was cut short by a violent jerk on his toe, and before he knew what had happened he pitched headlong into the brook, while his right leg shot out in a direction that would have taken it down stream at a furious pace had it not been attached to his body.

He fell face down in the brook; his breath was knocked out of him, and the blood gushed from his nose in a bright stream. There he lay in the water

gasping for breath and kicking for several seconds. But the stream was not deep, and presently his breath came back. Then he gave a yell that startled the countryside for half a mile around. Faint and dizzy he struggled to his feet, but his right leg acted strangely, for it kept shooting out from under him and going down stream, while something sawed away at his toe as though it would take it off. Had a mud turtle got hold of him? At the mere thought a new fit of terror seized him and he redoubled his shouting, but his right leg would not let him rest, for it continually jerked this way and that, so that he could scarcely stand. Was it bewitched?

Then there was a shout from the bridge above, and the end of a fish pole was thrust down to the terrified boy.

"Take hold of that, Tow-Head," said a voice, "and stop your crying. I will work you along to the other side of the brook where it's only six inches deep."

"What were you making such a noise about, Tow-Head?" the voice continued. "There's no shark in the brook, and your hair isn't even wet. Why don't you come along, you sleepyhead? You can't expect me to drag you with the pole."

"Something has got my right leg and I can't," whimpered Tow-Head. "I guess it is a turtle; he has got me by the toe."

"Perhaps it's a fish," replied the voice from the bridge.

Then Tow-Head remembered the line on his toe, and new courage came to him. "Maybe it is," he

Tow-Head's Prize

stammered. "I did have a line on my toe when I fell in."

Then he pulled gently with his foot, and for answer there was a sharp jerk on the line. "Why, it is!" he exclaimed, all excited.

"It can't be the old 'He-One,' can it?" asked the voice excitedly.

Then Tow-Head began working in to shore, all the time drawing gently on the strange something that tugged at his foot. Then a few bubbles came to the surface, and a second later the great trout that we had so often seen under the bridge, gently fanning the water with his fins, floated to the surface and rolled over on his back.

For a second the boy thought he must be dreaming, the great speckled beauty was so much beyond his wildest expectations. Then he seized the trout in both hands and scrambled up the bank, shouting at the top of his voice, "I've got the old 'He-One!' I've got the old 'He-One!'"

For once Tow-Head's lethargy entirely left him. He did not even stop to take the fish from the hook, but started for the village at the top of his speed, one end of the line still tied to his toe, and the other in the trout's mouth.

His clothes were dripping with water, his face and blouse were smeared with blood, but both his eyes and mouth were wide with excitement, as he raced to the village, shouting to everyone that he met, "I've got the old 'He-One!' I've got the old One!"

Five minutes later he burst into the country grocery store, breathless and excited, gasping, —

"Mr. Murrey, come quick! I've got the old 'He-One,' and I want to weigh him before he shrinks."

Mr. Murrey, who was quite a boy himself, came up the cellar stairs two steps at a time and hastily put the big trout into the scales. Tow-Head's eyes opened wider and wider as the grocer shoved the weight further and further along on the beam. At three pounds and a quarter it refused to rise again, so that was declared to be the true weight of the great trout.

The King of the Clouds

The first time I saw the King of the Clouds it was by a mere accident. He was on his way to the upper air, going up in that beautiful spiral peculiar to the eagle and hawk family, which man always imitates when he has any great mountain climbing to do.

I could not have seen the King this time, had he not been clearly outlined against the blue green of a distant mountain top. One more turn of his spiral, and he would have had the summer sky for background, and this was so near his own silver gray in color that I should not have noticed him.

We were a party of mountain climbers, half a dozen boys, with one glass between us. This I quickly borrowed and focused on the cloud-aspiring

eagle. It was a beautiful sight to see him wind up, beyond the mountain top, into the blue depths. He went up as easily and gently as a wreath of smoke on a clear day. I tried to follow him, in my boyish fancy, but it taxed my imagination to the utmost. I tried to see the green earth gently fall

Eagle

away beneath me, and the broad fields shrink until they became mere bright squares of green and gold; the towns along the great river turn to toy villages that any child might have picked up and tossed about at will; to see the broad Connecticut narrow down to a silver ribbon. Then to look down upon the twin mountains, one each side of the river, and

see them also fall away just as the valley beneath them had done. Then to have my horizon widen, and great sweeps of hill and valley spread out in every direction. First the foothills of the Green Mountains away to the north, and Monadnock's peak, round and symmetrical. To the east Wachusett, a hazy purple. Away on the southwestern horizon line, barely seen, but every second growing clearer and clearer, the blue Catskills, and away to the south, a silver glimmering just at the horizon line. This was the Sound, seen across a panorama of eighty miles of hilltops and valleys.

When the eagle had reached such a height that one had to strain his sight to follow him even with a glass, he set his wings, just as a hawk will do when he plunges down to the earth and descended like a falling star, — not straight down, but in a beautiful, oblique course that made the aërial performances of parachute and balloon seem like child's play.

Again I tried to follow him in this downward plunge, — to see the landscape gradually narrow, the mountain tops on the horizon line grow dim and finally fade away in the distance. Then the twin mountain tops come gently up to meet one, with the green earth swiftly rising, and mere specks taking on familiar shapes.

When the eagle reached an altitude about the

same as that of the mountain, his oblique course began to curve, until it had become almost parallel with the mountain side. Then thinking he had got down into the atmosphere of man and lowly things, he soared majestically away, over the meadows to the opposite mountain, and was visible no more that day.

The second time that I saw the Cloud King was from the mountain top as before. This time we were picnicking. We were seated about a large rock, and luncheon was proceeding, intermingled with stories and laughter, when we heard a pathetic little sound like the cry of a child or the bleating of a lamb coming from no one knew where. It was very faint at first, but gradually grew louder, as though coming our way. We gazed along the cliff, and back down the path, and in every direction but the right one. Then a shadow fell upon the cliff below and moved rapidly up toward us. Then I looked up into the sky, and almost directly over us was the Cloud King, with a little lamb in his talons, bearing it away to his mountain eyrie. The poor lamb, who seemed to be calling to us for assistance, had probably been stunned by a blow on the head and his eyes picked out before the eagle had started with him, and had now revived enough to bleat pitifully. We heard him but for a moment, for his

cries grew fainter and fainter, and long before the eagle was hidden by the trees, we could no longer hear them.

My third glimpse of the Cloud King was from the summer hotel at the top of the mountain just at

Carrying off the Lamb

sunset. A windstorm had arisen in the valley below, and one half of the broad expanse was in sunlight, while the rest was as black as night. The dividing line between the storm and the sunlight was as apparent as that between night and day. The eagle was going home to his mountain fastness

across the valley when the storm struck him. For a moment it beat him back, and he actually lost ground, but his great wings buffeted the whirlwind fiercely. His wild scream could be heard above the bellow of the wind as he battled with the elements. Like a strong ship, he turned and met the storm squarely, and by degrees gained on it. The lightning played upon his white crest, and his wings gleamed like burnished silver in the lurid light. Then with strong, steady strokes he went straight up the wind to his nest at the very mountain top. He seemed to glory in his strength of flight, for the boisterous winds were akin to his wild, imperious nature. The thunderbolts of Jove and the whirlwind were his element, and he swam the ether as a fish might the deep.

The most startling act in the life of the Cloud King I did not see, but the following account of it was given to me by a friend who had witnessed it.

A girl about ten years old was wheeling a baby carriage along a dusty country road. It was the ferry road leading down to the broad Connecticut. The morning was warm, and the sunlight danced on the surface of the river until it shone like a mirror.

Suddenly a great bird was seen flapping its wings in the air just above the baby carriage. The sun

was so bright that the little girl's eyes were dazzled, but she felt instinctively that the baby was in peril. With great presence of mind and good courage she sprang to the rescue, clasping her baby brother

The Eagle and the Children

about the waist. The strong talons of the eagle were by this time hooked in the baby's dress, and the broad wings sought to bear it away into the upper air to a terrible death. But the combined weight of the children was too much even for the

Cloud King's strength, and he could not lift them from the ground.

Suddenly realizing their peril, the girl screamed for help, and her father, who was working in a field near by, came running to their assistance.

His horror can better be imagined than described when he saw the eagle about to bear his child away in its steely talons. The father shouted and waved his arms, and ran with all his might.

Seeing that he was foiled in his design the great bird loosened his hold from the child's dress, and flew away over the river to the mountain.

After this incident, which was written up by a local paper and widely copied, there was great indignation against the Cloud King. Several hunters tried to shoot him, but all were unsuccessful. They could not get near enough to use a shotgun, and none were skillful enough to shoot him on the wing with a rifle, and they never saw him sitting.

I alone of all the boys in the village had discovered the Cloud King's nest, and I had become deeply interested in the fortunes of the eagle family. I had spent several pleasant afternoons watching them during the week that the two eaglets learned to fly. I had seen the old birds push them from the nest, and then hover over them as they sought to battle with the air, even flying under the young birds and

buoying them up when they were about to fall upon the cliffs below.

One of the best riflemen in the neighborhood, hearing that I knew where the nest was, urged me to show it to him. While I was very loath to disclose the Cloud King's secret, the hunter finally persuaded me by laying the responsibility for all the children in the county upon my shoulders, saying that if any child were to be carried off by the eagle I would blame myself for it all the rest of my days.

So, reluctantly, I led the way to the eagles' mountain fastness, feeling almost like a traitor The nearest point from which the nest could be seen was about forty rods down the mountain, as the slopes were heavily wooded. But there the Cloud King was on his favorite perch, the dead top of an old pine that had probably been struck by lightning. Neither the hawk nor the eagle takes any pains to conceal himself when he lights on a tree, but prefers to be out in the open, where he can see what is going on.

The old eagle made a splendid mark, as his silver-gray form was strongly silhouetted against the green of a pine further up the mountain.

The hunter could not get a rest, so had to risk an offhand shot.

Almost at the same instant that the rifle cracked

the great bird sprang from his perch and gave three strong strokes with his wings. This carried him well out over the crest of the mountain. Then he set his wings for his last plunge downward, as I had seen him do in the upper air.

Down the mountain side he came, flying just above the tree tops. Although he passed over our heads like a bullet, we could see that his head drooped slightly and his talons were clinched.

I do not think that he moved his wings once after he dropped over the mountain's crest until he fell in the road at the foot of the mountain, nearly half a mile below.

We found him in the road as we had expected, with his great wings spread to their utmost and his head thrust between two weeds as though in hiding, but his hiding was probably a mere accident, as he was stone dead.

He was shot through the body, very close to the heart. A human being so wounded would have dropped dead in his tracks, but this noble bird's last impulse was to spread his wings to the utmost and hold them rigid until the last spark of life left him.

To-day his form sits upon the hunter's writing desk, looking scornfully down at his slayer. His broad wings are folded upon his sides, their mighty

sweep forever stayed. No more shall these matchless pinions carry the Cloud King seemingly into the very sun, or bring him safely down on that lightning descent of a mile. The wild, imperious heart that gloried in the storm and screamed defiance to the whirlwind is forever stilled. But even death has not wholly robbed his visage of its stern ferocity, and in the withering glance of his eye you seem to read his scorn for men and all their works.

What Puzzled the Doe

It was the last of October, and the barbaric coloring of autumn was aflame upon the high mountain top and deep down in the slumberous valley. It had come like a conflagration, catching first a bush or a swamp maple along some water course. Then the bright flames had spread from sumach to ash and, mounting higher and higher, had at last set their bright seal upon beech and rock maple, until on this crisp autumn morning the mountain was a veritable Sinai. So bright it was that no artist's brush could have adequately reproduced it, yet it blended so well with the brown pasture land and the green meadow that the eye was soothed and the senses rested by this gorgeous pastoral in the great harmony of Nature.

The Deer Family

It was very chilly for the time of year, and white frost was on the weeds and grass along the runways and by the brookside. And in many places the grasses were fringed with fretted beads of frozen mist, that would vanish like a shadow at the touch of the sun.

It wanted half an hour of sunrise, and the pretty country village at the foot of the mountain still slept, only one enterprising farmhouse sending forth its wreath of blue smoke.

A silent old crow was winging his way over the valley to distant corn fields. He had slept comfortably all night in the top of a spruce on the mountain side and was going for his breakfast.

Down the old cow path that led from the wooded slopes of the mountain to the open fields below, a proud buck came leading his little family to the turnip field, where they had made a fine breakfast the morning before. The buck moved like a lord of the forest, stepping with that quick firm tread so full of grace and strength. There was something in the motion of those slim legs that suggested steel springs that could at any moment rebound with lightning rapidity and the strength of a catapult.

Whenever he came to a brush fence or other obstruction he made the boast of his supple limbs good, for he bounded over it with an airiness

that fairly seemed to set at naught the laws of gravitation.

He was followed at a short distance by a doe, who was in turn closely followed by a fawn of seven or eight months. The doe gave herself less airs than the buck, still her every motion was light and graceful, but the fawn with his pretty leopard's coat and dainty manners was the fairest of them all.

He followed like a dutiful offspring the footprints of his mother, knowing that she would choose the best way and keep him from harm. Whenever the trio stopped he crowded forward against his mother's side and thrust an inquisitive muzzle towards hers, asking what it meant. Occasionally the buck or doe would nip the top of a tempting head of grass, but they did not linger long, for they had determined to breakfast upon turnips.

It was the first day of the open season in the state of Vermont, but the deer knew not that the hunter was on their trail; the morning breeze was just as fresh and the fields just as sweet as they had been the day before.

Presently the three bounded over a low stone wall and were in the field of turnips. The doe faced the wind and the buck the opposite direction, that they might cover both points of the compass with their keen nostrils. They always took this precau-

tion whether sleeping or awake, for it gave one more safeguard from their many dangers.

It took but three or four stamps of those keen-cutting hoofs to lay the dirt bare around the root of a turnip, and then it was pulled with the teeth and eaten at leisure.

It was a pretty picture, this trio of wild creatures getting their breakfast from the bounty of Nature and the toil of man. But the meal did not proceed leisurely; it was hurried and restless, with sudden startled liftings of the head and a continual twitching of the short tail.

Once the buck raised his head and tested the air in all directions, snorting and stamping and shaking his head, as though doubtful or suspicious, but he finally concluded that the taint had been in his own nostrils, and the doe and fawn, who had raised their heads excitedly, resumed their feeding.

A moment later there was a small puff of smoke from behind a little spruce, at the other side of the meadow, nearly four hundred yards away, and a 38–55 Winchester rifle bullet, singing its dirge of destruction, came hurtling across the intervening distance.

The little herd did not see the smoke, their heads being down among the green turnip tops, so there was no warning, not even a suspicion; for what

nostrils, however keen, could be expected to distinguish the dreaded man scent a quarter of a mile away, unless the wind was very strong?

The instant the sharp crack of the Winchester came up the wind to the feeding deer, the buck, caught fairly with a bullet behind the shoulder, sprang into the air with a short explosive snort. The bewildered and paralyzed brain said, "Flee!" but the limbs for once refused to obey, and the noble animal collapsed and fell heavily, then heaved a deep sigh and stretched out motionless in death.

The doe and the fawn threw up their heads, wild-eyed and terrified. Their native instinct and wild training said, "Flee!" but the sight of their mute and bleeding protector, the one upon whom they had always relied in time of danger, and the uncertain echo of the rifle that seemed to come from all directions at once, held them spellbound, rooted by fear to the spot.

Then there was another puff of smoke from behind the little spruce, and a second bullet cut a row of turnip tops under the doe's belly, burying itself in the field beyond. It was a good line shot, but a little low. Then the wild instinct of self-preservation asserted itself, and the doe and fawn bounded away over the wall and were soon lost in the woods at the foot of the mountain.

On and on they went, the wild mother leading in graceful bounds, and the dutiful fawn following in her hoofprints, for that was the only safe way, going at such a breakneck pace. Their white flags were up,[1] and the fear that had been bred in their veins since the days of Adam grew rather than diminished as they fled.

Possibly the frightened doe expected the buck to rejoin them soon; but neither she nor the forest nor the brookside ever saw him again, for his antlers were hung above the fireplace in the hunter's home, and his brown coat made a soft mat for the feet of little children.

On through deep gulches where the spruce and pine hung darkling, by tamarack swamps where their hoofs sunk deep in the soft moss and the ferns were still green, through long stretches of first growth that the woodsman's ax had spared, they fled, it mattered not where they went, so long as they saw not man or any trace of his handiwork. Once when they came suddenly out into a mowing they heard that terrifying roar again, like the crack of doom, and fled on, fear lending wings to their hoofs.

This time it was only an irate farmer blazing away at a woodchuck with a rusty old shotgun, but

[1] This phrase refers to the deer's short tail which stands erect, like a small white flag, when the animal is fleeing from its pursuers.

they had not the fine discrimination to distinguish between a Winchester and an old muzzle-loader, and so their fear was wasted.

For the first hour or two the seven months' old fawn bounded lightly after its mother, exulting in its sinewy limbs and in the joy of flight. It was thrilling to spurn the green sward with those dainty hoofs and then to rise lightly over a brush fence or stone wall. But as the flight wore on, without cessation, the fawn lagged behind and was coaxed and threatened by its wild mother, who knew their danger better than her offspring.

In the middle of the forenoon they trotted into a broad green meadow. It was traversed by a wide, swift river, which the doe would have swum, had she been alone, for the more water a deer puts behind it the safer it feels, but the current was too swift and the swim was too long for the fawn.

Midway in the meadow, where the lush grass was high and buttercups and daisies grew profusely, they crossed an imaginary line, which henceforth was to play an important part in their fortunes, but of which they knew naught.

After the meadows were passed the foothills came close in to the great river, and afforded the deer better cover for their flight. Here, too, they found a peculiar path, broad and straight, with two glit-

tering strips just so far apart, stretching away into the distance. Here were convenient sticks to step upon, and for a time the way was easy. But soon they heard a rumble and a shriek that was like nothing they had ever heard before. It gave new wings to their hoofs, and they fled on like the wind. But the rumbling grew louder and louder, and again that demoniacal shriek sounded across the broad river and reverberated among the foothills, now coming from this direction and now from that, as the echoes rolled from hilltop to hilltop.

Then a great hissing, smoking, roaring monster, running like a moose, with both thunder and lightning in his hoof beats, came after them out of the north.

They strained every muscle, and their hoofs rose and fell with lightning rapidity. Then the hideous demon gave a series of short wild shrieks and made the hills ring, and added to it a strange rhythmic, beating sound.

With that instinct bred from long generations of their kind that had fled before hounds and other pursuing foes, the doe doubled sharply to the right, leaving the railroad track at a high embankment, and taking a plunge of twenty feet down a sharp incline. With dutiful instinct the fawn followed, straining its shoulder in the plunge, and the two dis-

appeared in the spruces, the fawn limping painfully while the train rushed on like the passing of a hurricane.

In the deep spruces the doe turned back to coax and caress her injured offspring, who was bleating painfully. With her warm muzzle she stifled the sounds of pain, for she knew that any noise on their part was dangerous. To travel any further that day was out of the question. So she hid the fawn in a fallen tree top and ranged near by, occasionally taking shelter in the friendly cover.

There they rested until the sun was low in the west, when hunger and a sense of peril that still lurked in their wake made the doe restless, and after coaxing and caressing the fawn the two resumed their flight, but at a much slower pace.

Soon they came out on the brow of a hill overlooking a village. This was the abode of man, their worst enemy, so they made a detour, going further into the foothills. In so doing they crossed one of those broad, smooth paths that they noticed so frequently, but did not dare follow, being suspicious of everything that was not natural, and this was surely artificial.

Shortly after crossing the path they heard a peculiar short cry at regular intervals, that seemed to come nearer and nearer. They quickened their

pace, going as fast as the fawn reasonably could with its lame shoulder, but it was not fast enough, for they soon began to be annoyed by the cry of a fox-hound that came nearer and nearer. This new danger was certainly on their scent, and they could not escape as usual in flight. As the baying drew nearer, the doe stamped and snorted, and the fawn limped painfully after her. They crossed the broad path for the second time, just as a team rumbled past, and the driver noticed the fleeing doe and fawn and the pursuing hound.

Down in the village he stopped at a farmhouse and hailed a stalwart man sitting on the porch.

"Hello, Jem," he cried, "I just saw a doe and fawn cross the road. They went into Thompson's pasture, and Si Higgins's hound was right after them. The fawn seemed to be about tired out. You had better go up and see about it."

"All right; much obliged," was the reply. "I guess I'll take along a revolver. Perhaps I may have occasion to use it."

He went into the house, put on his coat, thrust a large revolver into his pocket, and hurried up the road.

In the spruces about forty rods from where the man with the team had seen the doe and fawn cross the road they came to bay. The fawn could limp no

further, and the doe, with that strong, maternal instinct, which is the most beautiful thing in the life of the wild, would not desert her offspring, even in the face of great danger to herself. The hound came in furiously, following at sight, and baying a steady stream, until the forest was filled with its cries.

The Doe at Bay

The mother hid the injured fawn in a thicket and came out bravely to meet the enemy. The hound circled round and round, trying to get into the thicket, springing at the doe's throat, and snapping and snarling. But she kept him at bay for a time, striking with those sharp, cutting hoofs, but the pres-

ent anxiety and her long flight had sapped her strength and nearly crazed her; she gasped for breath, and each inspiration was a long-drawn whistle, while the hound was fresh and eager for the quarry.

Then there was a cracking of the underbrush and another enemy hurried to the scene. It was man, the most dreaded of them all. At the sight of him the hound renewed his efforts, springing, snapping and snarling, at the now doubly terrified doe.

It was a strange and pathetic picture, illustrating three stages in the manifold form of animal life. First, there was the wild creature, slight and graceful, with but one thought, that of self-preservation; next, the domestic animal, half wild and half civilized, eager for the chase and the taste of warm blood; and lastly, man.

Again the hound sprang at the doe's throat, catching her squarely, and bringing her to the ground. Then the man raised his arm, something gleamed in the light that filtered through the leaves of the forest trees, and then that roar which had ushered in this hideous day again woke the quiet of the woods. But miracle of miracles, the lightning and the bright flame that mean death to denizens of the woods did not injure them this time. With a howl of pain the hound loosed his hold on

the doe's throat and limped away into the darkness. Bewildered and amazed the doe struggled to her feet and fled in an opposite direction, the fawn following slowly and bleating in answer to her calls of alarm, while the man was left alone holding the smoking revolver.

In a tangle of weeds and clematis, underneath a low-hanging hemlock, they found rest and shelter, and their strength and courage soon returned to them. This was a strange land into which they had come, a land where the hounds no longer followed them, and where the thunder no longer killed. The reason for all this was very simple. It was not an accident that the fatal lightning had struck the hound instead of the deer, for the man was a game-warden enforcing the law in the state of Massachusetts, which protects the deer from both hounds and men and leaves them tenants of the wilderness, unfettered and free as the winds that blow.

An Ill-timed Flight

All day long the hoarse, wild cries of waterfowls had resounded along the shores of a lonely Canadian lake where the clans of wild geese were gathering.

Summer and autumn had come and gone. The broods had been reared, and now the time had come

when they must say good-by to the pleasant lake that had sheltered and fed them, and seek a warmer clime.

A Battle Royal

Many battles royal had taken place for the leadership of the flock. Aspiring ganders had fought upon the frozen sands like Spartans, giving buffet for buffet, and blow for blow. These had not been

sham fights, but real contests of strength and ability to stand pounding. It seems almost incredible, but a blow from the wing of a wild goose will frequently break bones, and if it falls upon a man's head it will usually stun him.

There had been eight or ten broods of geese reared this year at the little lake, and usually they would have gone off quite peacefully in two or three flocks, but this year it was different. Something told them that there was hard weather ahead. Winds and storm must be met, and wise and wary leaders must be chosen. So the older and wiser ones clamored for a large flock, led by the most experienced gander in the region.

Small squads of two or three geese had been restlessly flying to and fro all day long, apparently arranging matters, and trying to conciliate the many warring factions. Occasionally a solitary discomfited gander winged by; he had been defeated in the tournament and would have none of them.

When twilight came the sun set in a hazy west, gray clouds scudded across the sky, and the night looked threatening. Then the wild cries along the coves and inlets of the lonely lake increased tenfold, and the several broods rose in air, each commanded by the gander that had watched over it through the warm summer months.

Once or twice they circled about, then the larger flock headed southwards, soon resolving itself into the wedge-shaped form that has been compared to a harrow. Other flocks followed fast, lapping upon the ends of the two trailing sides. By the time that the lake in the wilderness could no longer be seen, the several broods had joined in one great flying wedge. Like an iceboat the flying V cleaved the high, clear air. While far down on the dun earth beneath their cry could just be heard, "Honk! honk! honk!"

Higher and higher they mounted as they swept on, until they had reached the altitude of nearly a mile. The sky was overcast and the night would be very dark, so they must fly high and run no risks.

The wind was blowing a fresh southeast gale that increased with every hour that passed. Down on the earth familiar objects floated back under them, and the whole visible world was a great kinetoscope, changing and shifting rapidly. Houses were like toy blocks, and teams were like insects crawling slowly upon their way. Broad rivers seen from this great height were like narrow, snakelike threads of silver, wriggling over the brown, sere earth.

With the coming of dusk a fine, drifting, sifting snow began pelting the flying wedge. Caught in the folds of the strong southeaster and hurled at a velocity of

fifty miles an hour, the geese were pelted with snow like sand, but they did not mind a little thing like that. They were also flying directly in the teeth of the gale, and its resistance against their broad breasts was very great, but their strong wings bore them steadily on, at sixty or seventy miles an hour. They would have made ninety, if they had had no wind to face.

At the very point of the majestic harrow was the tried leader of this long, perilous flight. He had piloted the flock southward for a score of years without mishap. Without a chart or compass, and with no visible object to guide him, this old mariner of the ether marked their course unerringly south southeast, and did not vary two points by the compass for hours. But with each hour that passed the wind increased in velocity and the fall of snow became heavier.

The pace of the flock had now fallen to fifty miles an hour, and the sticky snow had so driven into their down that they were snow white, and the edge of each wing was tipped with beads of ice. The snow would not have stuck to the geese so, had not the heat from their bodies melted it. It then froze and clung all the closer.

We have all seen forest trees, with the strength of Hercules in their great branches, bend beneath a load of snow and ice. So the strong-winged geese

were gradually weighted down by the sticking, freezing snow that drove into their feathers and froze to their wings. While they had been flying a mile high at twilight, at midnight they were flying barely a quarter of a mile high.

When great storms sweep over our country and trains are reported hours late, one of the hardest obstacles that the driver of the iron horse has to overcome is the atmospheric pressure of the storm against his locomotive. So the flying V pushed hard against the southeaster, but the gale had more strength than the flock, which gradually became tired by its buffeting, and no longer flew with that strong, easy motion, but swayed with the gusts of the gale, like a tired thing with failing strength.

The flock was now barely a score of rods above the snow-laden earth, and sinking lower and lower with each mile. Something told the geese that this was not well, but the heaviness on their wings was like the weight of sleep upon dream-laden eyelids, and they could not shake it off.

Again and again their leader uttered warning cries, and by heroic efforts led the flock a few rods higher in its flight, but again it sank weighted down by snow and ice, and fatigued by the buffeting of the wind. The trailers were flying even lower than the rest, and suddenly a chimney pot loomed up in front

of a young gander. He struck blindly against it, breaking his neck. With a heavy thud he fell upon the roof, rolling into the yard, where the children found him next morning, and that family had baked goose for their Sunday dinner. But the rest of the flock swept on unmindful of the fate of their comrade. A few miles further on this flying harrow collapsed utterly, and its members dropped down into a side street of a little Canadian village.

. . . . . .

It was early morning in the small hamlet of St. Regis; none of the villagers were yet astir, but a ten-year-old boy stirred uneasily in his sleep and opened his eyes. The cold gray light was stealing through his bedroom window, and he knew it was early morning. Usually he would have fallen quickly asleep again, but this morning thoughts of a new sled that had been promised him the week before, and for which he had cast his eyes about the bedroom every morning since, forestalled this second nap. He jumped out of bed with a shout, for there was the sled bright and shining as new paint could make it, with its name, *Speedaway*, and the boy's own name in gold letters upon it.

His next thought was of snow, for the night before the earth had been bare and brown, and the frozen sod had rung like rock beneath his boot heels.

He melted the frost upon the window with his breath and peered out. The ground was white with snow, and the gate posts were crowned with tall snow hats. Then he heard the harsh, discordant squawking of geese, a sound that they make when

They Flapped the Snow

disturbed in sleep or on waking in early morning. His father did not keep geese, although the neighbors did, and he wondered what it meant, for the sounds seemed to come from his own back yard. Then he was treated to a great surprise, and what he saw would have astonished even an older and

wiser mind than the boy's, for the snow in the back yard began heaving and tumbling about, and scores of wild geese wriggled out of what Lewis had thought a snowdrift a moment before. They flapped the snow in every direction, and made a great noise, squawking and calling.

Lewis rubbed his eyes to make sure that he was not asleep, then looked at the geese again. They were still there, but were getting restless. He also noticed that over in the lot beyond the yard the snow was tumbling about, and more geese were emerging.

Then the roar of a shotgun woke the morning stillness, and with a great noise the flock rose in air, filling the countryside with its cries.

Three geese flopped about in the field near by, winged by the hunter's shot, but the rest flew swiftly away, leaving the boy open-eyed and open-mouthed with wonder. He raised the frost-bound window for one departing look to make sure that he was not dreaming. No, there was the wonderful harrow, sweeping through the gray morning sky like the wind, and the unmistakable cry of the wild geese floated back to his ears, clear and strong, "Honk! honk! honk!"

David and Goliath

The warm summer sun had shot its first broad band of light over the Green Mountain range and crowned the Equinox mountain with a coronet of burnished gold. The base and sides of this isolated peak were still wrapped in slumberous shadows, and only the tall trees on the mountain's brow had felt the touch of the day god's wand.

But all the birds and wild creatures down in the valley had seen it, and were rejoicing in the ever new miracle of morning. Even those birds least gifted with song could not resist the enchantment, and the gay-liveried blue jay was calling, "Day, day, day," as though there never would be another.

The robin and the meadow lark were more melodious in their greeting, and they chirped and gurgled, "Morning, morning, morning." The bobolink heard them down in the meadow by the little brook, and straightway poured forth his song of joy.

Half an hour before, a little herd of deer, consisting of a buck, a doe, and a pretty pair of twin fawns had wended their way with dainty hoofs down the mountain side, following a cow path to the old mill pond, where there was both food and drink.

After the family had drunk long and deep of the

cool water, the doe waded in to her knees and began ravenously devouring the lily pads that fringed the shore. She was very thin, the double duty of giving milk to two such sleek fawns as frolicked on the bank of the mill pond having told upon her. But their beauty and grace justified the sacrifice, even in the eyes of an impartial observer, and much more so in that of their wild mother.

The buck, who had taken it upon himself to be custodian of the herd this morning, although he usually ranged alone, had gone into an adjacent field to make a delicate meal on the heads of clover and herd's-grass. He was an epicurean in a rather dainty family, for a deer rarely eats clean, but nips away at the choicest parts, leaving the coarser portion for the less fastidious domestic animals.

It was half an hour later and the sun was shining brightly down into the valley when the domestic herd that usually frequented the pasture surrounding the mill pond came forth from the barnyard, and started leisurely down the lane for the day's feeding ground. Even at this early hour the locust disturbed the morning symphony with his harsh note. It would be a warm day when the locust shrilled so early. So with the instinct of coming heat upon them, the cattle started for the mill pond, the great Durham bull leading the way.

Leadership among animals seems more pronounced than it is with man, although it is not so well systematized or understood. Usually it is a male that determines the policy of the herd or flock. Where there is no male in the domestic herd the leadership falls to some cross, wrinkled-horned old cow, whose years and experience easily give her precedence.

The great Durham bull looked every inch a leader as he marched along, his sleek mahogany sides shining in the sunlight, and his broad shoulder and deep flank suggesting great weight. He was usually very good-natured for a bull, but on one or two occasions had shown a frightful temper.

With their keener instincts that are always on the alert, the wild herd at the mill pond noticed the approach of the domestic creatures long before the latter discovered that their favorite feeding grounds were occupied. The buck with his usual vigilance noticed their approach first, and sprang back over the fence into the pasture, to see that no harm came to the doe and fawns, although he did not fear much from the cows. They often grazed together, but the bull he did not like the looks of, as he had not seen him in the pasture before.

The great Durham also, as he approached, did not profess acquaintance with the slight stranger, but

eyed him suspiciously, at the same time pawing the ground, and giving vent to a hoarse and ominous bellow, that said plainly, "What are you doing here, my fine fellow? Who gave you leave? We shall investigate."

But the buck did not recede. He stood statuesque, his head up, his slight form contrasting strangely with that of the massive bull. His eyes were a little brighter, and his nostrils dilated slightly, but not a muscle moved. He looked every ounce of him ready to battle for his rights in the ancient fields which his kind frequented for centuries before cattle ever set foot on the soil.

Again the great Durham bellowed, and the echo rolled away like distant thunder. The doe and fawns swam the pond at a shallow point and fled precipitately up the hillside. The buck still stood his ground, but now there was an ominous glitter in his eye, and his muscles grew tense.

It was history repeating itself, David and Goliath had come out to fight for their respective peoples, but this battle would be even more unequal, as the buck would probably flee at the first onset.

The bull lowered his head and bellowed again, the sound dying away in a shriek of rage. With his powerful hoof, he sent up showers of dirt that partially enveloped him, but his eyes burned through

the dust cloud like veritable stars of war.. Yet the buck still viewed him with disdain.

Then with a roar that even startled his own herd, he launched his great hulk full at his slight adversary; but the buck stood as though made of marble. On rushed this avalanche of bone and muscle, while the slight object of its fury stood as though rooted to the ground. Was it fear that held him, was all power of motion paralyzed by the sight of this monster? One more jump and the great horns would be planted fairly in his side. Then the steel-like muscles of the buck gathered slightly, and with a motion light as air and as quick as the spring of a bow, he jumped aside and his adversary passed by. But see the buck's second move; he whirls like a flash as the bull passes, his forward hoof descends, laying open a gash six inches in length in the bull's side, even down to the bare bone.

The fury of the bull's charge carried him several yards past his adversary. But when with a roar of pain he wheels to front his enemy again, the buck stands as before, his eyes glittering and his nostrils extended with the scent of battle.

Again Goliath charges, and David waits for the oncoming of the giant. Once again that lightning spring carries the slight buck out of the bull's reach. Again the buck wheels, and his terrible hoof

descends, and this time he crushes a rib of his enemy, and the bull groans at the sharp stab.

Foam drips from the infuriated monster's lips, and blood streams from his side. Beads of sweat stand on his flanks, and his eyes are blood red, his fury blinds him, and he charges recklessly, again and

The Fight

again, but at each charge his enemy slips as though by magic from his reach, and that sharp hoof plows a furrow in his side. Three ribs are broken, and his side fairly streams with blood. He roars and pants, his great nostrils dilating as though they would burst.

But his adversary still stands as erect and undaunted as at the first charge. David's stones are hitting their mark, and Goliath is weakening. But the fury that has made his kind the sport of the matadore and the toreador since the days of the Alhambra will not let the bull rest, and he charges again. This time the hoof cuts deeper than ever, and the bone is laid bare just behind his shoulder, while the blood spurts from a severed vein. He is being worsted; blinded by his fury, and weakened by loss of blood, he stands head down, uncertain, roaring with pain and anger, while his jaunty enemy views him disdainfully. At this point in the combat the cows flee to the barn, bellowing with fright, and at the same time men and dogs come running across the fields. Then David lightly jumps the fence and disappears up the hillside, leaving Goliath to limp painfully back to the barn, his spirit broken forever.

August in the Pasture Lands

When the freckled-faced, bare-legged boy swings a six-quart tin pail upon his arm and starts to the pasture lands for blackberries the tide of summertime is at its height. It was for the fullness and richness of such days as these that seeds sprouted and

buds opened in springtime. For such dulcet days the winds were tempered and the warm rains fell and sunlight awoke the slumberous life in embryo and plant.

The bare-legged urchin is not quite so bare-legged to-day as usual, for he has pulled down his trousers, and put on an old pair of shoes as protection against the thistles and thorns that lie in ambush for a small boy's bare feet.

Perhaps he is swinging the tin pail about his head by way of diversion, or maybe it is upside down, and he is beating a lively tattoo on it, while he whistles "Marching through Georgia," in imitation of fife and drum. It is safe to say that he is ready for some antic, for his blood is so joyous that it needs must find expression. In his exuberance he frisks and frolics like a young lamb as he goes.

The sunlight has a yellow cast that it did not have in July, but occasional puffs of air that come from the deep woods are sweet with thoughts of September. It is one of those days when Nature seems uncertain whether to roll back to July or to sweep on to September.

There is that old familiar jangle of the cow bell fitting in so nicely with one's thoughts as one climbs the bars. It is more sonorous than the silver tinkle from the sheepfold, but quite as pleasant.

What country scene is more suggestive of peace, plenty, and quiet content than that of a herd of cows or a flock of sheep quietly grazing? There is no hurry or worry in the life of these flocks and herds. Their mood is contemplative and ruminating. Frequently they pause, with a tempting bunch of grass half eaten, to gaze abstractedly across the fields. There is no hurry, no dissatisfaction.

Although these scenes are so familiar to the country boy he never tires of them. His eye wanders over the sleek herd, and anything uncommon in any of the cattle is immediately noticed by him.

In the distance he can see the dark plumes of pine and hemlock softy outlined against the lighter greens of maple and beech in the woods beyond. This is where the blackberries are most plentiful. They love the sheltered nooks just under the woods, where the first warm sunbeams find them in May and the chill winds do not blow. There is a pleasant odor of balsam from the firs to-day, and it gives a spiciness to the sweet-scented air.

"If blackberries only grew upon briers without thorns," is the boy's mental comment as he begins rattling the luscious fruit into his pail.

At first he falls to work with a will. It is fun to feel the pail grow heavy with the weight of the berries. Each ring or scratch on the pail is a

August in the Pasture Lands

measure mark, and the boy can tell you to a gill, at any time, how many berries he has picked. By the time the three-quart mark is reached, however, the novelty has worn off, and the boy is ready for a diversion. He may find it in a hop toad, whose ways he will study. Or in a snake that he must kill, for the serpent's head never goes unbruised when stone or club is at hand. He thinks it would be pleasant to flush a bevy of young partridge and see how many of the birds he could count. The broods are still together, and some of the late chicks are not more than half grown.

There is also an old log where partridge berries grow, and a pleasant knoll where the checkerberries are thick. "A fellow can't be expected to pick all the time," he thinks to himself, "when there is so much doing as there is to-day." If he only had his knife, which is at home in the pocket of his other trousers, he would go into the woods for a few minutes and prospect for spruce gum. How a boy's knife always gets into that "other pocket" is a mystery.

Presently he looks up and sees a great hawk hovering in midair, giving just enough motion to his wings to keep his balance. Flash! zip! Down he comes like a toboggan. Now, small creatures, look out, for Redtail is after you. The boy's eyes open

wide with astonishment when the hawk rises, dangling a large striped snake from his beak. He can see the snake writhe and twist, but it is of no use. His fate is sealed.

The birds, as well as the boy, are taking advantage of this free feast that Nature has provided so bountifully, and a pair of pert robins scold away at the intruder, just as though they owned the pasture and had put up trespass signs. Sometimes they find overripe berries lying on the ground where they have fallen, or frequently they perch upon the bramble, and eat directly from the bush.

The writer once owned a hunting dog who would stand up on his hind legs and rattle blackberries into his mouth, as a bear would pick blueberries. Occasionally when his paw hit a thorn, he would look quite quizzical, as much as to say, "Now, what does that mean? It certainly was not a wasp."

In an old maple stub at the center of the pasture are two families of flickers, or yellow-hammers, as the boy calls them. The tree has been pierced in a dozen places by this curious woodchopper, and one would judge from the holes that there was a whole colony. The boy likes to steal up to the tree and drum on the trunk with a stone, and then see the yellow-hammers come out and go flying across the pasture. This does not frighten the birds

Young Flickers, from Life

much, and it affords the boy considerable amusement. This wide-eyed urchin knows all the woodpecker family, the red-crested, the red-breasted, the yellow-bellied, and all the rest.

By the aid of such diversions as these the afternoon wears away, and the berries in the pail near the top. He never could fill the pail if he did not stop occasionally, or so he thinks. There is a black ring around his mouth. He would say that he had not eaten more than one or two handfuls if you were to ask him. But I am afraid that quarts would be nearer the truth. This also he deems necessary to picking, for it continually reminds him what delicious fruit he is gathering, and causes him to renew his efforts.

He can do very well when he is alone, and usually comes home with a full pail, but if Ned Fuller or Tom Hawley are along it makes all the difference in the world. It seems strange that three active boys cannot pick faster than one, but the truth is that three pairs of eyes see three times as many things to divert the mind, and three active brains devise more than three times the amount of sport that one does.

It is not until the sun rests upon the tree tops of the western hills, and its golden gleams fall aslant among the pines at the edge of the woods, that the

boy turns his steps homeward. He will drive the cows along as he goes, — that will save another trip to the pasture. They do not need much driving, but jog soberly along before him. Their sides are swelled almost to bursting with feed, and in one or two cases their udders drip milk.

What was that black streak across the stones where the cows ford the little brook? Perhaps it was a shadow. No, there it is again, but it goes so quickly you can scarcely make it out. There, now it has stopped. A slim snaky head is thrust out from behind a stone and moved from side to side, while bright eyes look furtively at the boy. It is a mink. The boy will remember and set a trap here in the fall.

The swallows are skimming and darting over the pasture land, busy catching flies, and the grass is already quite wet with dew. It is the gentle hour of dewfall, when the breath of flower and leaf and woody shrub is distilled by the moisture, and a sweet incense arises.

This is devotion indeed, when the incense of fern and flower rises from the altar of earth, and is borne by the winds into heaven. It is the reverse of the beautiful legend of Sandolphin, where the prayers of the righteous were translated by the angels into beautiful flowers.

"Whey, there, go 'long. Come out here, Shep, and help." The boy is getting in a hurry, for, notwithstanding the two quarts of blackberries he has eaten, he is as hungry as a bear. His mouth fairly waters as he thinks of his brimming bowl of bread and milk, black with the berries he has picked this

A Mink, from Life

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afternoon. He will take it out on the doorstep where he can watch the night hawk and the bats and see the stars appear.

There is something deliciously refreshing in this summer twilight, after the heat and glare of the day. It cools the blood in the boy's veins and makes his heart happy. By and by it will make him drowsy,

too, and he will say good-night to the wind, the stars, and the earth, and climb to his quiet chamber and sweet sleep.

Famine in the Wilderness

The great white blanket of snow fell early in the wilderness during the disastrous winter of 1903 and 1904. As early as the week before Thanksgiving the first fall came, completely covering the seared grass and the heads of small fronds. The very next week it was followed by a much heavier fall of snow that hid the tall weeds and bowed down the laurel and the poison hemlock.

This cold shroud for the tender plants and creeping things is really a kind provision of Nature, by which she shields the tender plants from the biting winter cold, for once well covered by the snow they are much warmer than they would be exposed to the winter blasts. If you will notice, it is not where the snow lies deep that vegetation is winterkilled, but where mischievous winds have blown away the snow and left the roots exposed to the bitter cold.

So it was really a tender act of Nature to wrap her children in this white coverlet, and put them away for their long winter sleep.

The provident squirrels had heard the wind whis-

pering in the leafless branches that the winter was to be long and terrible, so they had laid in an extra supply of nuts, and had prepared for a good, quiet sleep.

The muskrat too had been warned in some unaccountable way, and had made the walls of his house uncommonly thick.

Deer and moose had yarded early, as indeed they

The Muskrat and His House

had to, on account of the deep snow, and with some warning of coming famine had planned the yards as large as possible. A moose or deer yard is one of the most interesting chapters of wild life that the woodsman reads in the new snow. Early in the winter, when the snow is only a few inches

deep, the leader of each herd selects a large area of country containing yellow birch and other tempting browse and also deep thickets of firs which will act as a shelter from the biting winds of midwinter. It is also most important to include several living springs of water in the confines of this yard, which is really the winter quarters for the deer family. When the herd is large the yard may extend for miles, but usually it includes a few hundred acres. When the deep snows of winter fall, the deer and moose mark out certain main thoroughfares through this tract of country, with smaller arteries running in every direction. After each new snow the tracks must all be trodden down again and the highway to food and water be kept open. This custom of moose and deer for protecting themselves against the snows of winter which hem them in and cut off much of their feeding ground, is called yarding.

Ordinarily they could keep the snow beaten down in certain tracts of country, which they marked out, like a fox and geese track on a large scale, but this year the snow was dry and mushy, and although it was beaten and stamped by those powerful hoofs, it would not pack. In spite of all they could do, deer and moose could not keep the yard broken out ahead of the silent, sifting, drifting snow that fell day after day, gradually beating them back from the

outer confines of the yard into the main arteries. With each branch trail that was cut off a part of their browsing ground was lost.

Saplings that could be bent to the ground were stripped of every twig, and the bark peeled on many of the smaller branches. Everything that could be reached, whether it was nourishing or not, was eaten, and still the snow fell and the cold strengthened. Finally the laurel was completely covered, and little scrub spruces that had held their heads proudly and considered themselves quite important trees before the snow came were covered until their blue-green plumes barely showed. Larger pines and spruces were loaded down almost to breaking with the steadily falling snow. Whenever the wind stirred in the branches it rattled down a shower of snow, and the freed plumes of the fir sprang gladly back to their accustomed places. But they did not long remain there, for the feathery flakes soon bent them down again, until they groaned beneath their burden.

After the sun turned at the winter solstice, and its rays fell more obliquely on the earth, the cold grew more intense and the white vistas of the wilderness took on new terrors for the already hard-pressed wood folks.

There was not a spark of warmth in the steely

glint of the sky on those ghastly nights, and the stars were as cold as the firmament in which they twinkled.

Then many of the trees whose boughs were loaded to breaking with snow did a very strange thing, for they lifted their branches under their load until they presented the appearance of an umbrella that has been turned wrong side out. It seemed almost like a miracle to see the trees slowly lift their arms and raise the burden that had so weighted them down the day before. But this is the explanation. The intense cold contracts the bark on the limb, and as the bark is shorter on the upper side it contracts faster than the lower side, and so draws the limb up. I have never seen this phenomenon but once, and then the thermometer stood at twenty below zero at high noon with the sun shining.

Some mornings, when the sky was overcast and it was too cold to snow, white crystals of frost would bespangle the tips of the birches, and the entire forest, including the trunks of the trees, would appear as though dressed in a gauzy garment.

Finally, in the middle of February, the lowest record was reached, and the thermometer in many parts of the Maine wilderness touched fifty and sixty below zero. Then in the nighttime above the howling of the wind and the moaning of the forest a sharp crack would be heard like the report of a

rifle. It might not be apparent at the time what made the noise, but when spring came sap would be found trickling down the trunk of an occasional maple or birch, and a long seam would be discovered where the intense cold had cracked the solid wood. It is cold indeed when the strong heart of a tree is broken, so was it any wonder that many deer and moose perished of exposure and famine before the spring winds of 1904 awoke the arbutus?

Joe Sharette was snowshoeing through the wilderness, going from Camp No. 3 of the Great Northern Lumber Company to a more isolated camp in the lake region. His only luggage was three days' provision and a double-bitted ax. The snow was six feet deep on the level, and on the tops of many of the drifts he could walk among the lower branches of tall trees. Many of the drifts were probably twenty feet in depth.

There were few tracks in the woods this winter, and that made it seem even more lonely and deserted than usual. For, to the eye of a woodsman, tracks are the index to the woods, telling him much of its life, and it is very pleasant as one travels through the snowbound forest to read them.

Doubtless the forest folks had been abroad this winter, but the frequently falling snows had obliterated their footprints almost as soon as they were

made. Of course deer and moose could not stir abroad in such deep snow, but there was no reason why the rabbit and the broad-padded lynx should not be about.

Joe Sharette

Near noon of the second day of his tramp Joe came upon one of the arteries of a moose yard, and followed, thinking to unravel this usually blind trail, for as the snow was so deep he reasoned that the yard would be narrowed down considerably.

As he followed the trail and came upon others crossing and recrossing it, his confidence in his ability to locate the moose was strengthened, for many of the trails were barely discernible and seemed to be abandoned altogether. If he could only strike one well-beaten track he felt quite sure that it would bring him to the quarry.

About the middle of the afternoon, when he had snowshoed about two miles upon the trail, he struck a path that showed fresh moose signs, and he followed it eagerly. He had not gone a hundred yards farther when the tall, gaunt form of a bull moose loomed up fifty yards ahead of him. The moose was standing with his rump towards Joe, and even from that distance he looked very thin and wasted. His head was evidently down, for the antlers did not show.

Joe had no gun with him, and his object in stalking the moose had simply been to discover how they were wintering. So he crept forward as stealthily as an Indian. The wind was in his favor, and he would probably get a good look at the big fellow before he was discovered. With the hunter's instinct he kept a clump of small firs between him and the game, and thus got within about twenty-five yards of the moose. Then he peered out through the friendly plumes of a little pine, and what he saw made him draw a low whistle.

For there the big moose stood, with his head down, his homely muzzle buried in the snow nearly up to his eyes, and his broad antlers resting in the top of a little snow-bound spruce. He was as gaunt as though his great skeleton had been set up in a museum and his hide thrown loosely over it. His legs were spread apart to steady him, and the fierce combativeness of his race had gone out of him. There he stood, weak and humble, tamed by the elements and gnawing hunger that had eaten away his fine courage until he was as gentle as a lamb.

Joe had heard old hunters tell of like instances, but he had never seen anything of the kind himself. Cautiously he crept forward, hallooing as he went, and making sure that the animal's seeming lethargy was not merely a fit of abstraction.

Once when Joe shouted at the top of his voice the broad-antlered monarch raised his head and gazed sadly at him, but after a moment the moose concluded that the intruder was not worth his notice, and dropped his muzzle in the snow as before. Then Joe crept up to his side and put a hand on the great bull's flank, but he did not stir. Then he pulled his insignificant tail to see if there was really any spunk left in him, but the bull did not move. Then Joe went cautiously around to his head, and

touched his antlers with the handle of his ax. But the bull did not mind it.

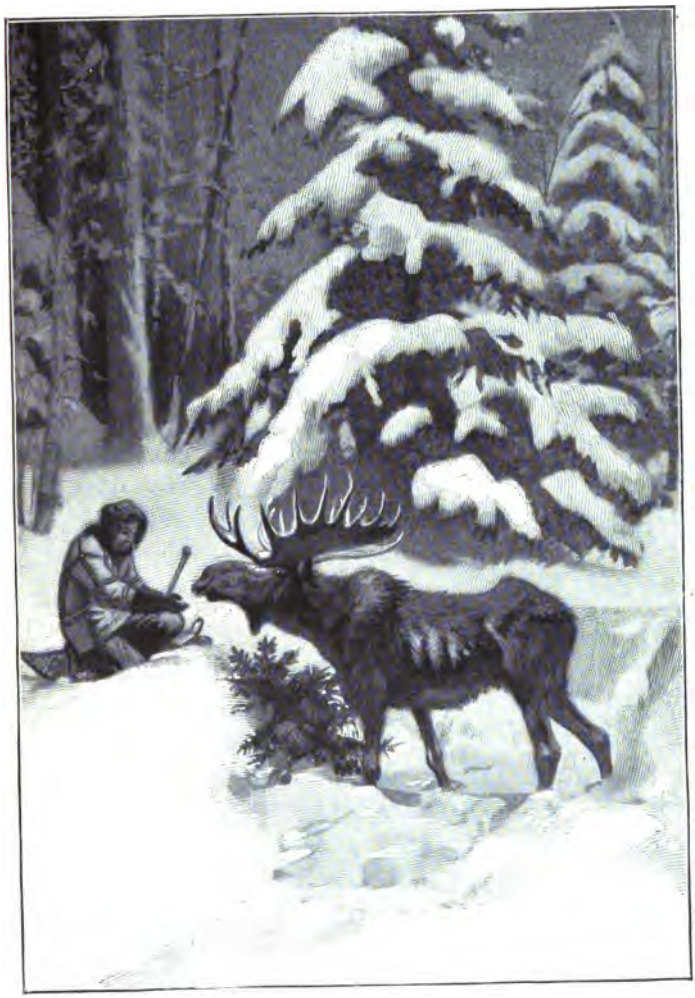
Although his own provision was low, the wood-chopper, moved by a strange lump in his throat, brought a piece of corn bread from his pack, and held it down to the moose, again poking his antlers with the ax-handle.

At first the bull paid no attention to him, but, finally, being annoyed by his persistence, he slowly raised his head and looked straight at the wood-chopper with his dark, hunger-sunken, pleading eyes.

Then Joe thrust the bread forward, and the long hanging upper lip of the moose reached for it. It was only a morsel for such a great starved brute, but it showed the intent of the stranger.

Joe would like to have fed him all there was in the pack, but his own life would have been the penalty. After reaching the long upper lip towards his new-found friend several times, the moose again thrust his muzzle in the snow and stood motionless as before.

The afternoon sun was gilding the distant tree tops, and blue shadows were stealing from behind the trunks of the trees. There were several miles yet to be covered before reaching camp, but Joe took the time to fell some small birches across the beaten



Joe Sharette Feeding the Moose

track in reach of the moose, in hopes that this browse would stay starvation until a crust should form over the snow so that the moose might find access to broader feeding grounds.

A few yards farther on he came upon a cow moose standing head down under a spreading spruce, as her lord had been. An eight months' old calf was thrusting its muzzle into her flank and occasionally giving a hoarse, pathetic bleat. Near by was the carcass of a two year old, which had succumbed to starvation.

About the fallen moose were broad-padded lynx tracks and the paw-print of a fox. The weasel, too, had been there with his blood-thirsty muzzle.

Eleven moose, in all, Joe counted in the yard, five dead and six but shadows of their former muscular, sinewy selves.

Like the big bull, each had lost his fear of man in that greater fear of starvation. All looked at Joe with the same hollow, sorrow-haunted eyes.

When the purple shadows on the snow grew somber, and what little warmth the sun had possessed had gone out of it, Joe left the famine-haunted moose yard behind and struck across country for camp.

When the warm May winds blew fresh down the aisles of the ancient forest, and Mother Earth had for-

gotten the terrible winter through which she had just passed in the glad thought of the young spring, Joe trailed the wilderness again, and came to the spot where he had found the starving moose. He could tell the place by the birches that he had felled into their yard, but even he had not thought that some of these saplings would dangle from stumps ten feet high when the snow melted.

With his forester's instinct he was able to mark down all the familiar objects that he had noticed that day. He even found the spruce under which he had seen the cow moose and her bleating calf.

The skeleton of the two year old was still there, and that of the calf near by, but the old cow had probably weathered the winter, for her bones were not visible. Eight skeletons Joe was able to locate, and as he scoured the forest for a quarter of a mile in the vicinity he concluded that the other three moose, including the big bull, had escaped the clutches of starvation.

If it had been the birches he had thrown in their way that had saved them, Joe was glad; for the pathos of those hollow, hungry eyes, asking him dumbly what it all meant, Joe has never been able quite to forget.

The Prize of the Creel

Just above the picturesque meadow city, where the noble Connecticut makes its longest loop between Bellows Falls and the Sound, is situated the quaint old town, known to the Indians as Norwottuck, "the town in the midst of the river." Its English name also is pleasant to the ear, but it is not so fitting as that given it by the Indians, so we will call it Norwottuck. The Connecticut River here makes the bend technically known as an oxbow. One end of the main street rests upon the river at the north, just where it turns to make the first U-shaped curve of the bow, while the other end of the street rests upon the river at the south, where the other curve is made completing the bow. From one end of the street to the other, or from one part of the river to the other is a good English mile, while by boat around the oxbow is seven miles.

I know of no other spot on the Connecticut where this grand river can have such a ruse played upon it by the canoeist as here. For one has merely to set his canoe upon wheels, or take it upon his head for that matter, and push it into the river at the upper end of the street, and, without rowing a stroke, he can float around the bow seven miles and take his boat out of the water within half a mile of home.

The current most of the way is swift, and by occasionally dipping a paddle into the water and pushing the boat back into the current, the trick is done, the current being swift enough to keep a spoon bait purling nicely all the way.

I know of no pleasanter occupation for a fresh summer morning than floating down the Connecticut in a canoe. The entire river from Bellows Falls to Saybrook is a perfect poem. Most of the way green meadows filled with growing corn and tobacco line the river, while the hills stand back at a respectful distance of three or four miles. But just below Norwottuck the twin mountains are very inquisitive, and have come close up to the river, partly to do homage to it, but, I am afraid, more to view their own grandeur in its mirror.

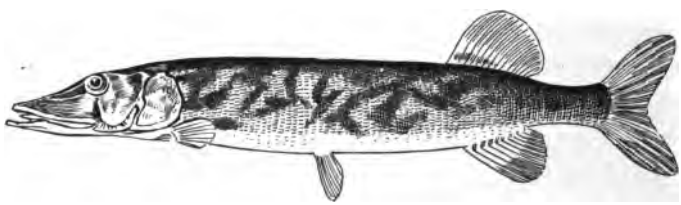
Geologists tell us that in the glacial or drift period this region was a vast lake, which finally broke through between the mountains and made its way to the sea.

On the particular morning that I have in mind, there was little wind and the sun was not too bright, two signs that make the heart of a fisherman glad.

As I pushed the boat into the river at the upper end of the street, an osprey came sailing majestically by, giving me his cheerful fisherman's greeting. For he, too, is a fisherman and wishes all the fraternity good luck.

Once well out in the river I let out about eighty feet of trolling line, carrying a spoon bait, and also rigged up a rod with which to work nearer the boat. The trolling line one can hold in his teeth and still feel a strike.

It did not matter, though, whether the fish bit or not, for the gentle motion of the boat, the soft lapping of the water, and the bird song that floated from the bushes that lined the shore made one al-



Pickerel

most forget for the first half hour that there were such things as pickerel, bass, and muskellunge in the river.

Occasionally a little willow-hidden brook slipped gleefully into the great river, laughing as it came. At such points the bass like to feed, and lave themselves in the fresh brook water.

The banks of a river are always interesting and forever changing. Here there is a little bush-fringed cove, where the pads are luxuriant and the pickerel

like to lie. Further along there will be other coves, some fringed with sweet flag and others girdled with cat-tails. Then there are innumerable little eddies giving strange effects of light and shade, and running water flashing over colored stone.

There is no more marvelous kaleidoscope in Nature than the banks of a river.

Whir-r-r-zip, splash! I had forgotten I was fishing. It is only a little pickerel that has taken the spoon on my rod and has run under the boat. Here he comes! Whir-r-r, splash, splash, flop, flop. Now he is in the boat. What a sharky-looking chap he is, with his long, flattened head and slim body! But he is much sweeter meat than the larger pickerel, and his tug on the spoon gives one a good thrill.

"See me, — see me, — sir-r-r." Here comes the osprey again, cheerful fisherman that he is. "Hello, old frog, down in your tub," he is saying, "what luck are you having? See me, — see me, — sir."

For a second he steadies himself, giving just motion enough to his wings to keep his balance, while he measures the distance and the depth of the water with his eye. Then down he comes, like a boy coasting on a steep hill. Away under he goes, till not a feather is seen, but it is only for a second, for here he comes again, throwing spray from his wings, and gleaming with water.

"Well done, old fellow, good fisherman." There is a pound sucker in his claws, and he flies away with it to a pine grove, where I imagine there is a nest.

It takes a good eye to calculate so high up in the

The Osprey Fishing

air the position of the fish deep down in the water. But the members of the osprey family are trained fishermen, as the suckers and river dace and sometimes a pickerel can testify.

Thus the moments go, the boat dances on the water, and the little waves splash against the lily

pads, or gently lap the pebbly beach. From down in the meadow comes a blithe good morning from a dozen happy throats. My old friend bobolink is there, and the cheerful robin is keeping him company. Now a meadow lark rises from the grass, pouring out a sweet note at every stroke of his wings. Song sparrow, too, is there, and he vies with bobolink in liquid sweetness.

All is hope, joy, and peace. There is no harsh sound of hammer or grinding machinery or shriek of whistles, no indication that afar is the busy, bustling city.

Perhaps the fish are biting, but it does not matter if they are not, for the air, the scintillating sunlight, and the blue heavens are joy enough in themselves, and if the fish happen to bite so much the better. Besides, the fisherman's talisman is hope: if the fish do not bite to-day they will to-morrow. If he does not get a fish all day long, he still expects to land a big one, who will take his hook just as he winds up the line and untackles. Not until the line is all in does he cease to hope. If a man could put the hope he feels in fishing into all the concerns of life, he would never despair.

Willow Island, just above the three bridges, two thirds of the way round the oxbow, is reached, and the little pickerel in the bottom of the boat is the

only catch. But how could one be disappointed when the sky is so blue and the air so sweet?

Besides, if one had to stop to take off fish, he might lose some little whim of Nature that would be worth a whole basketful of shining pickerel.

The boat rushes into the swift current and rounds the island, the spoons following dutifully, the one upon the rod quite near shore.

What is that sudden tug at the spoon, that electric thrill along the pole, that sudden start of the whole tackle? Instinctively the hand grips the rod, the muscles in the arm tighten, and the right hand goes to the reel. The trolling line goes overboard, the paddle is dropped in the bottom of the boat, but the precious rod that has suddenly become electrified is held tight at any cost. Then the line goes down stream singing like a bullet, while the reel fairly whistles trying to pay out the line fast enough.

Twenty, forty, sixty, eighty feet, are gone, there are only twenty more. This fish will have to be snubbed if he does not turn in another second. The rod is raised, with the tip pointing in the opposite direction from that in which the fish is going. The strain will be terrible, and must be gradually and evenly distributed along the entire length of the rod. But, just as the last coil on the reel is reached, the great fish turns and heads straight for the boat.

Now quick with the reel, or there will be a fine snarl and the fish will be lost. How the line sings and the reel clicks as you work frantically at it!

The line is water-soaked and swollen, and there is no time to wind it even, but I succeed in getting fifty feet of it back on the reel, and the fish has the other fifty to take with him under the boat. But he does not stop to sulk this time. It is too early in the game. He is out the other side of the boat, and running straight across the channel. Now quick work or we shall lose him. The tip of the rod touches the water as it is dipped to let the line pass under the end of the boat and out the other side. A second later, and the line would have been drawn squarely across the boat and would have snapped like a bit of twine.

Now the fish is sulking in ten feet of water. The three rushes have taken his wind, and the spoon does not help his breathing. Wind up the slack line and be ready for him, for he will be up and doing in a minute.

Whirr, whew-w-w, there he goes straight for an old log. He must be turned this time at any cost.

Faster and faster the line pays out, until he is within ten feet of the log. The rod is held high in air, with the butt towards the fish. Then the tip makes a beautiful curve and comes down to the butt, to see how that sturdy section likes such treat-

ment, while eighty feet of line jump clean out of the water, dripping spray the entire length. Then the line gives and floats slack on the current. The fish has been turned and is coming back. But slowly this time, for the big tug took all his strength, and he is waiting for his second wind.

He thinks he will stop a while in the shade of the boat, for the line does not pull so there. He would sever this bit of cord in a flash if he only had a chance, but it always gives at just the wrong time.

Five minutes he sulks, and then goes down stream like a cup defender on the home run.

This time he almost reaches one of the piers of the bridge and has to be turned as before. The rod bends gracefully but does not quite return to its former position. It does not like too much bending in one day, but it will get straightened out by to-morrow. Here he is again under the boat, back sooner than before. His destiny seems to be connected with the boat, but there is still fight in him.

Then he tries a new trick, for suddenly he jumps a couple of feet out of water and comes down squarely across the line. Quick with the slack, for if the line is tight now he will pull the hook from his mouth. This is the first glimpse I have had of him, and it nerves my arm afresh.

Again the relentless line is reeled in and gently

tightened. The fish gives a bit and is being worked towards the boat. Three times more he breaks away for a run down stream, but finally comes alongside and lies within a yard of the boat.

Oh, for a net or a gaff, or something with which to land him! The hook will tear out if he is lifted into the boat by that alone.

But he has solved the problem for me himself, for he gasps, flops, and then turns his white belly up to the sunlight. It is quite easy now to get one hand in his gill and to haul him aboard, where he lies flopping and gasping, until a blow from the paddle quiets him. That is the best way for the fish, and for you, too.

His weight was only nine pounds, but that meant a good fish to land on an eight-ounce rod and a line warranted to hold thirty-four pounds dead weight, and he was easily the prize of the creel for that summer.

A Feline Fury

It was the last of March, but one would have said from the dreariness of the landscape and the boisterousness of the wind that it was midwinter.

The week before, spring had promised us arbutus in its warm breath, but with one of those sudden

caprices of Nature that have made New England weather famous, old Boreas had swept out of the icy north, and the timid legions of springtime had gone helter-skelter back to Virginia, where they had pitched camp, and decided to stay for another week before resuming the march northward.

Si Perkins, his dog Nipper, and the old shotgun were on their way to the woods this cheerless afternoon, and their destination was the laurel swamp. At least, that was the destination of the boy and dog; the old gun went wherever it was carried.

Si was fifteen years old, Nipper was two, and the gun was probably fifty. But it was a gun, and that was enough for Si.

Nipper was a full-blooded white bulldog, with a drooping lower lip and bloodshot eyes. He looked the very incarnation of moroseness, though really with his friends he was a very good-natured fellow, but his friends were few and far between. Not that he was disliked, for many sought his friendship whom he found wanting. The truth was that Nipper was exclusive, an aristocrat among dogs, and not easily approached.

He had two passions. One was fighting, and the other was hunting rabbits. This latter achievement was considered quite remarkable by all who knew Nipper, as there is not one bulldog in fifty

that has nose enough to follow a track, and even that fiftieth one probably would not have the desire. But Nipper had both the desire and the nose.

He did not bark regularly, like a hound, but gave a queer little squeak every rod or two, half whine and half yelp. But there was no hound in the neighborhood that could bring in as many rabbits as Nipper could, and no one knew quite how he did it.

As soon as the woods were in sight Nipper struck into the swamp, while his master went around on higher ground where it was better walking, intending to penetrate the swamp further on in the woods, but fate had not decreed that he should hunt rabbits at all that afternoon.

Si was trudging along with the heavy old gun slung in the hollow of his arm, occasionally stopping to listen for Nipper's peculiar whine, when he was brought up short in his tracks by a savage snarl in the bushes just ahead of him.

Filled with astonishment, and also a bit fearful, he swung the old shotgun to his shoulder, and took two or three steps in the direction from which the snarl had come. It had sounded like a cat, and he did not think it could be a larger animal.

A little scrub spruce stood between him and the growling stranger. Si stepped to one side of it and

got a good glimpse of an old log, one end of which had been hidden by the spruce tree. There, on the further end of the log, he saw an object that made the gun very unsteady in his hands and also made him long fervently for Nipper.

The Wildcat Springing

Crouched on the log, about twenty feet from him, was a catlike creature a little larger than Nipper. It had a snarling visage bristling with whiskers and dotted with two glaring, yellowish-green eyes, while in its two powerful paws it held a partridge which it was eating.

Instinctively the old gun went up, but Si did not know whether it was loaded with bird shot or something larger. It would be dangerous to trifle with such a customer as this. But in the second or two that he hesitated the cat decided for both of them, for, crouching low upon the log, it suddenly hurled itself like a stone from a catapult, directly at the boy's head. Its back was slightly arched, and its legs were held stiff, and not drawn up as a domestic cat's would have been. Si noticed this much, but he did not wait to take further notes. For a second the sight gleamed between the eyes in the whisker-fringed face, and then he pulled the trigger.

The gun had been loaded for some time, and the recoil was terrific. As Si was a little off his guard, the old gun kicked and knocked him down in the snow in a manner that bewildered him for a moment. But when he arose and took a hurried inventory of himself and his surroundings, a beast, the size of which made his nerves tingle, was lying dead at his feet.

He poked the animal with the muzzle of the gun, standing ready to use it as a club, but the wildcat was quite dead.

At the sound of the gun Nipper came running to his young master and sniffed the strange beast gingerly. He poked it with his nose and growled,

but since he could not get it to fight he soon gave up and went in search of a rabbit track.

But there was no rabbit hunting for Si that day, for with as much exultation as a young savage probably feels on taking his first scalp, he shouldered the great cat and started for home. He had to stop to

A Wildcat, from Life

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rest several times on the way, but finally reached home, breathless and excited.

The kill was at once recognized by Si's father as a large wildcat, and Si was the proudest boy in town. The cat measured thirty-five inches from tip to tip, of which six was tail. Its weight was thirty-two pounds, and its strong white claws, when bared,

were something to admire and not to wish for a close acquaintance with.

Its coat was a yellowish gray, almost tawny, with long, dark stripes down the back and fainter ones on the sides and limbs. Underneath, near the skin, its coat was soft and thick, but on the outside the hair was longer and coarser and tipped with black. Its tail was ringed with black and had a black tip.

The following day Si took the big cat to the county seat and got five dollars' bounty on its scalp and was also offered five more for the pelt, but he would not part with that trophy.

Late in the afternoon Si went to the old log again, but this time he kept Nipper at heel. The dog sniffed excitedly about the log, and soon discovered an opening at one end which the boy had overlooked. With his usual fearlessness Nipper plunged into the cavity, whining and yelping. A moment later Si heard a piteous, catlike cry from the interior of the log and the sound of Nipper's jaws crunching something.

"Nipper, Nipper, come out here," called the boy, but Nipper was quite well satisfied where he was, and continued his fun inside. Finally, by dint of coaxing and threats, Nipper appeared, bringing a chunky, bobtailed kitten in his jaws. This he laid down at

his master's feet, as much as to say, "This is your share of the plunder. I have finished the rest."

Si wrapped the little cat in his muffler and at once started for the house, not daring to trust himself near the log longer, and feeling sure that Nipper had killed the rest of the kittens.

The kitten had just got its eyes open, and was probably about two weeks old, but it was nearly twice the size of a domestic kitten.

Luckily for the little stranger, a family of kittens had made its appearance at the house a couple of weeks before. So, after it was dark, Si put the wild kitten into the box with the rest, feeling sure that the old cat would take care of it along with her own offspring.

At first she was inclined to cuff and spit at the intruder, but seeing how ravenous it was, her maternal instinct got the better of her, and the little bob cat was allowed its supper.

Besides being much larger than the domestic kittens, which were about its own age, as near as Si could judge, the wildcat had several other distinguishing marks. Its short, thick tail, which did not taper like the others; its large feet, with broad black pads; its white claws, and thick, square-topped ears, all proclaimed it to be another breed of cat. A great difference was also noticeable in its forearms, which

were strong, sinewy, and compact, and really abnormal in size for a cat. Nature had evidently developed these forearms for striking terrific blows, and each generation of wildcats had added a little to their brawn. The head was also more blocky and brutal than that of the domestic cat, giving it a ferocious and determined look.

The kitten early showed signs of its wild nature, and soon gained the nickname of "Scrapper." When it was three months old it had driven all the rest of the cats from the box in which they slept, and even its foster mother was half afraid of it. It would sit upon its stub of a tail, with its back against one corner of the box, thus protected from behind, and glare around with its wild, yellowish eyes, daring anyone to do battle with it.

Nipper early took a dislike to the bob cat, and it was only by the greatest care that Si prevented him from killing the little fury. He always looked sullenly out of one corner of his eye when he passed it, and, if no one was near, the cat had to take refuge on a beam overhead in order to escape the dog's attack.

It grew half domestic during the first summer, but still retained many of its wild characteristics. It was now twice the size of the domestic cats, weighing in the autumn about twelve pounds.

It did not like to be handled, but it would sit upon your knee if you did not touch it. Its purr was unlike that of the domestic cat, with a queer staccato note in it broken up into quarter notes with a quarter rest between each.

The gait of this wildcat was also peculiar. It did not jump just like a rabbit, or trot like a domestic cat, but it would give a series of hump-backed, stiff-legged springs, bringing down all four of its paws in nearly the same spot. Its broad pads left a large track for so small an animal. It had no medium gait, and either jumped or walked.

Even during the first winter it showed evidences of returning to its wild state, for it went to the woods several times, and once was gone for nearly a week. But one wild night when the wind fairly shrieked, and the storm beat furiously against the window, the family heard a strange, wild cry, like a piteous cat call, only more guttural, and there was the Scrapper at the window, who had come back for a dish of milk and a chance to doze by the fireside.

With the very first suggestion of spring it took to the woods, and never visited the premises after that except during extreme weather in the winter.

It was often seen in the woods near the house, and was shot at several times by boys in the neighborhood, and although Si had several chances to

shoot it, he always remembered the bit of a bob-tailed kitten, and never could quite press the trigger, although he knew there was a five-dollar bounty awaiting him at the county treasurer's office, if he brought in the pelt.

But the second autumn something did happen that made Si change his mind about the cat.

It was about the first of October, and Si and Nipper had had several famous coon hunts. Coons seemed to be very plentiful that fall, and Si and his dog had taken two the first night they went out and one the second. This made them all excitement and everything that Nipper treed seemed a coon for the time being.

A Coon

So one night when Nipper treed something in the orchard behind the house, and summoned his master from sleep with his queer, whining yelp, Si's only thought was of coons.

He dressed hurriedly, and taking a lantern went to Nipper's assistance.

He found him yelping excitedly at the foot of an old sweet-apple tree. Si at once started up the tree to shake the coon down. But as he began to shin up the trunk, Nipper caught him by the trouser

leg and tried to pull him back, at the same time whining and acting strangely. This was very queer in Nipper, for he usually urged his master on with impatient yelps.

"What's the matter with you, Nipper?" asked the boy. "Let me go, let me go, I say!" but Nipper still held on and got a box on his head for his pains, and Si went up the tree without further hindrance.

At first he could see nothing of the coon, but finally located him a few feet above. At the instant Si started to shake the tree, the coon landed upon his back, with a snarl that made the boy's hair stand up, and began ripping open his coat with claws that tore through the strong garment as though it were made of paper.

Si never knew how he got down from the tree. He had a faint remembrance of catching at a limb or two, and sliding down the trunk like a streak, with the ripping, spitting, snarling fury still on his back.

The moment his feet struck the ground, with great presence of mind he threw himself on his stomach, and cried, "Take him, Nipper, take him, quick."

Nipper never needed a second invitation of that kind, and Si's words were hardly out of his mouth when he heard the dog's jaws click. He had missed, but struck again. This time he caught the furious

stranger in the shoulder, but the muscle turned under his teeth and he got only a mouthful of fur. Then there was a short scuffle, during which Nipper's jaws clicked several times, but his antagonist seemed to be quicker than he and eluded him. Finally the strange animal sprang upon the wall near by and fled to the woods, with Nipper in hot pursuit.

Si picked himself up and put his hand upon his back, which smarted strangely. His coat, vest, and shirt were all ripped open and dripping wet. He ran into the house and called his mother to dress his wounds. His back was a sorry-looking sight. There were scratches on it six inches long from which the blood flowed freely.

If Nipper had been a few seconds later his master's back would have been ripped to shreds.

After a few minutes Nipper came back from his pursuit, bristling and greatly excited. When Si held the lantern down to see if he had received any wounds, he saw that his muzzle was covered with cat hairs.

"It's the Scrapper," groaned Si. "The next time I see him, if he doesn't get a charge of shot then I'm mistaken."

When the first snows came Si and the bulldog went several times to the woods on purpose to hunt the cat. But Nipper usually switched off on rabbits.

Once he started the cat, but Si did not get a shot at him. He saw him several times at a distance, and got a good idea of what the cat would do if cornered in a fight.

It seemed to anger Scrapper to the verge of madness to have the dog following him. He would sit upon his stump of a tail and beat the air with his forepaws, and howl and snarl like the feline fury that he was. Such howls of rage as he gave made Si's skin creep, and he wondered what would happen to Nipper if the infuriated cat should once turn upon him. But Nipper would have been glad to see him coming. None of this cat hunting was successful, though, and the winter came and went.

One day late in March the dog went into the woods to run rabbits on his own account, his master being busy in the sugar camp. The dog hoped the boy would hear him running and get his gun and come out. He had often enticed him to the woods in this way.

The dog trotted along in his sober manner, until he reached the old log where he and Si had found the kittens. There seemed to be a strange fascination about this log for him. He sniffed at the hole in which he had found the kittens he had killed, but there was nothing interesting there. Somehow his fate seemed to be strangely mixed up with this fallen tree.

Then he heard a curious movement in a tree near by, and looked up. There, upon a limb of a beech, about six feet from the ground, was his enemy, with his back hunched and his countenance glaring as only an infuriated cat can glare.

Nipper and Scrapper

The cat was fully as heavy as the dog, and his muscles were like steel. Nipper had found this out on the night he tussled with him at the foot of the apple tree.

Many a hound of twice the white bulldog's weight would have stuck his tail between his legs and slunk out of the woods, his countenance saying plainly that he was not looking for a cat fight; but not so Nipper.

He trotted over under the tree and glared up at his enemy, returning the cat's look of hatred with in-

terest. There was a spit and a snarl from the tree. Nipper answered it with a deep growl, at the same time partly rearing upon his hind legs and whining in his eagerness to get at his foe.

Then the cat sprang, and Nipper settled upon his haunches to receive him.

Nipper was bowled over like a ninepin, but he got the grip he wanted the first time he struck.

His jaws closed fairly upon the cat's throat. He shut his eyes, and a heavenly smile overspread his homely dog countenance. This was the fight for which he had been born. It had been bred in the blood for generations. His sires had held on to the finish, and he would do so now.

The great cat's forepaws flew like lightning across Nipper's back, while his hind ones tore away at the dog's belly. Nipper knew that his fine white satin coat was hanging in shreds upon his back, and that his vitals would soon be dangling upon the ground. But he only closed his jaws the tighter, and the smile upon his countenance grew even more benign.

He could hear a strange gurgling and rattling in the cat's throat that filled him with joy and made his blood dance. He did not feel the pain of the terrible laceration he was receiving. He only knew that his teeth were sinking deeper and deeper in the cat's throat, and that the gurgling had nearly ceased.

Would he let go? Never. Men had burned him with hot irons and clubbed him with sled stakes to break his hold upon their dogs, and only one thing had ever caused him to break his grip, and this was a pinch of yellow snuff blown into his nostrils. This would not happen to-day, and even when his body had grown cold his jaws would grip the cat's throat like a vice.

Si found them there two days later, when he went to look for Nipper. The snow was crimsoned for yards around, and there were evidences of a desperate struggle, but the bulldog's jaws were still frozen to the cat's throat, and both dog and cat were dead.

"Poor old Nipper," sobbed the boy as he pried open the dog's jaws, and stroked his satin head, "you were game to the very end."

Two Forest Hymns

When I become world weary and the daily round of commonplace things no longer satisfies, I hitch a little bay mare, called Dolly, to an old carriage which I have previously laden with fishing tackle, blankets, and provisions, and go away to Three Lakes to be rejuvenated. The true lover of Nature can, at will, lay his heart to hers and literally be born

again even as the embryos and buds are quickened into new life in the springtime.

For the last three miles the way to Three Lakes leads through deep woods where the road is grown

Blue Jay

with grass part of the way, occasionally as high as the horse's knees. Here friendly bushes crowd close up to the carriage and sweep its top with soft fingers.

Myriads of the shy little folk of the wood come scolding and twittering, protesting against this invasion of their domain. A squirrel barks at me angrily, and the jay, who is a natural spy, gives his note of alarm and flies away through the tree tops to tell all the rest of the birds that the curious biped called man is coming, sitting in an odd nest, while a strange animal draws him.

The fence along which the red squirrel is fleeing with news of my coming goes directly by the cottage

and the lakes, so that the news of my approach will precede me.

To most of us who keep our eyes open the forest is like a great book which we can read almost as easily as we can a printed page. Did you notice that "spring" in the maple limb just ahead? It means that a squirrel has jumped from it to another perch, from which he is watching us with curious eyes. What was that little quiver in the bush by the roadside? It is a bird changing his position that he may see us better as we pass.

Hello! there is a partridge feather in that sand bank. This must be the spot where Mr. and Mrs. Partridge take the morning dust bath to keep themselves free of insects.

Hark! What is that reverberating beating like the drummer's long roll? It is cock partridge drumming upon the old log. A shy lady partridge may be watching him from beneath a bush near by, or perhaps the courting is over and she is sitting upon her eggs.

What stirred the ferns by the fence? A bird, did you say? No, birds do not stir things in that way. It is a rabbit. Don't you see him squatting by the fence? He is just the color of the ground and looks as though he were having his picture taken in the old "don't move" style. He is as hard to see as the puzzle hidden in a labyrinth of queer shapes.

Do you see that glimmer in the trees ahead? That is the first of the three lakes, and the tall pine is just behind the cottage, by the boat landing.

Blue Heron

There is just time to get out on the middle lake before sundown and catch a few fish for breakfast. The channel between the two lakes is barely wide enough to let the boat pass, and at one point you have to lie down as you glide under the limb of a tree.

Above me is a solitary old blue heron, who has known the lakes even longer than I have, but the lakes are not his exclusive property, for he has to share them with the dipper duck and the kingfisher.

If I have good luck, half an hour will give me fish enough for breakfast, and then I must hurry back to eat supper on the little porch at sunset.

What is that rustle in the grass?

Why, Chippy, I had forgotten all about you. It

is my little chipmunk friend of last summer, who has come out of his hole to see his old friend.

I'll snap him this bit of bread to see if he remembers me, for last summer he ate regularly with me. "Chipper, chip-chip." The morsel fell too near him and he has beaten a quick retreat to his hole, but he'll be back soon. Here he comes, turning his head this way and that inquiringly. Now he is standing on his hind legs, looking at me and sniffing the air. He distrusts the man scent on the bread, but likes its looks and its own particular smell. Now he is rolling it over with his paw.

Chipmunk

There it goes into his pouch. He looks now as though he had the mumps. Soon he is back with it to his hole. What a provident little chap! Here he comes again, the little beggar, standing on his hind legs and holding out his paw. Could he say, "What else have you got for me?" plainer than that?

Who is this silver-gray, spotted fellow, that comes coursing through the sky on swift wings, crying,

"Beef, beef?" He is the nighthawk, and a queer kind of hawk he is. Let us watch him. Down he comes so fast that the eye can scarcely follow him. No boy ever coasted down hill as this hawk is coasting down the mobile air on his strong wings. Hear that Who-o-o-o-o-o-o-p. That is his war whoop. Now he is up to his old height again, coursing along as before, calling "Beef, beef." Some unfortunate fly or miller is wriggling in his crop as a reward for the plunge he has just taken. He must have good eyes to see such small quarry thirty or forty rods away. The war whoop that you heard was not really of his making, for it was merely the air rushing into his mouth when he opened it to swallow the fly or bug.

Nighthawk

Now the great golden disc of day is resting upon the western hills, like the world upon the shoulder of Atlas. Broad bands of golden sunlight fall aslant through the arches of the woods, making long strips of gold. This is the signal for the fortissimo passage in the vesper hymn, and wren and robin and song sparrow swell their breasts and pour forth a flood of melody. There are innumerable other little chirps and twitters too confused to be distinguishable. Now half of the great golden disc has dis-

appeared behind the western hills. Mysterious little shadows are stealing from the underbrush and long shadow strips are alternated with the band of silver.

Now the sun barely shows above the western horizon, only the tops of the trees are golden. The gray streaks of light in the aisles of the woods have vanished and myriad shadows are dancing a weird minuet among the trunks of the trees. The vesper hymn has reached the final pianissimo passage.

Little Screech Owl

I always sleep well at Three Lakes. All the sounds that come from these lonely lakes and the deep woods about me breathe quiet and repose.

Whenever I awake I am sure to hear the wild, shrill song of my whip-poor-will up the road, and the deep booming bass of the old bullfrog, with the shrill strain of the piping frog. Occasionally a little bird will peep drowsily as he stirs in his nest or on some leafy limb.

A little owl likes to perch in the maple tree by the

road and fill the night with his shrill trilling, which is more like the song of a tree toad than anything else I know.

When that first white streak steals into the east at least half an hour before sunrise you will occasionally hear a startled twitter, as though some bird had wakened with the idea that he had overslept. A moment later you will hear the robin calling a few lusty notes, for he is a very thrifty fellow and is arousing the others. Then for fifteen minutes the woods are as still as though uninhabited by birds and squirrels, and you wonder what it means.

Squirrel

Look out of the window and you will see. There in the roadway is cock robin hopping about looking for worms. So it is all through the woods and adjacent fields. It is breakfast time and the little foresters are too busy with the morning meal to sing or chatter.

Away in the deep woods the partridge and the squirrel are scratching in the mold for last year's beechnuts or maple seeds that were too dry to

sprout. There is also choice picking in an old log when it has become so decayed that it can be scratched to pieces like earth, for it is sure to be full of grubs and worms. A red squirrel can even make a comfortable breakfast on pine cones, if he is hungry, although, as a rule, he prefers something daintier.

The white streak in the east has turned to burnished gold, and you hear an occasional exultant twitter or chirp, as though some songster were trying his voice, or the forest orchestra were tuning up before beginning the full chorus of the matin hymn.

The golden streak grows broader and brighter, and robin wakes the forest with a few loud, clear notes, then the hermit thrush joins in, singing a rich alto to the robin's clear soprano; wren and song sparrow have a short duet together, while the others all listen. Then robin and thrush, song sparrow and wren, thrill the forest with a sweet quartet.

Now the great golden orb of day bursts over the eastern hill, and every feathered thing in the forest that can sing or twitter welcomes him with an outpouring of his very soul. No half-hearted singing this, but the "Praise-God" of the woods for the warmth and gladness, the beauty and fragrance. How the sound thrills and reverberates through the arches of the green woods! How it stirs the air to

new freshness! The squirrels, too, chirp and chatter as though they did not know their voices were not to be compared with the bird notes.

Louder and louder swells the hymn of praise. Joy, joy, they all seem to be saying. God is good, the world is fair, the woods are sweet, and life is wonderful and beautiful.

Now the sun is out over the hilltops in full sight. His warm beams flood the aisles of the woods. The leaves and the flowers glow and glisten beneath his touch and the very air vibrates with new life.

The hymn of praise is at its height. This is the full organ of the forest and you may go up and down the world for a lifetime and you will not hear another such song as that of these little creatures welcoming the new day.